BIRDS IN GREEK LIFE AND MYTH

John Pollard

THAMES AND HUDSON

ASPECTS OF GREEK AND ROMAN LIFE

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For Charles Tunnicliffe

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PREFACE

While writing this book I have been constantly reminded of the great debt which I owe to the late Sir D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson's *A Glossary of Greek Birds* (1895, 1936) the inevitable foundation of all subsequent studies. During my time at St Andrews I was privileged to know the author, still occupying the chair of Zoology which he had continued to grace for upwards of sixty-three years, and to profit from his immense erudition.

Though birds played a prominent part in ancient Greek life and myth no book, as far as I am aware, has been devoted exclusively to ancient ornithology apart from Sir D'Arcy Thompson's *Glossary*. The latter, however, is a scholarly work of reference, where quotations are given in the original Latin and Greek, and a knowledge of the ancient Classics is presumed. The present book attempts to give a synoptic view of the attitude of the ancient Greeks to birds in ordinary, everyday life, as well as in the mythology which coloured all their thinking. It is based on the original ancient Greek authorities, whose faults and merits are illustrated by quotations from their works, all of which I have translated, with the exception of Herodotus where I have used Rawlinson. Many of the statements are inaccurate or fanciful but, as told by Greeks, rarely lack interest or charm.

It has always seemed to me that the value of a work on a branch of ancient science is immeasurably enhanced if its subject matter can be authenticated by modern instances. Happily birds have not changed since the days of the ancient Greeks and the descriptions given by the authorities can usually be identified. On the other hand it is probable that the climate has changed a good deal in the interval and that some species no longer found in Greece were formerly resident, or, alternatively, that species now common were once unknown. Modern maps which show the distribution of birds are not always reliable, particularly in areas where expert knowledge is rarely available. Hence I have not hesitated to refer, wherever possible, to my own personal knowledge of birds in modern Greece, or to recent articles upon the subject. In this connection it is hoped that the book may prove of interest not only to antiquarians, but to ornithologists and amateur bird-watchers as well.

The book is divided into three parts. In the first part birds have been classified according to habitat or type rather than by species, as being generally more useful both for the non-expert and in the field. With reference to nomenclature, birds' names are given in English with the ancient Greek equivalents in parentheses. The scientific Latin names of the various species or sub-species are also supplied.

The second part is concerned with the role played by birds in Greek life. The Greeks were no sentimentalists where birds were concerned but cruelly trapped and killed them. At the same time they were quick to observe that birds were reliable weather prophets and that their annual migrations coincided with seasonal changes. The popular pseudo-science of Augury appears to have developed partly as a result of such practical observations and partly out of a belief that birds were after all in some real sense divine. The third part deals with birds in Greek mythology, whether as the familiars of gods, in divine or human transformations, or as the emissaries of deities in the Minoan-Mycenaean age. Birds also figured largely in folklore, as Aesop bears witness. The evidence for bird cults is also discussed. Finally, like most other peoples, the Greeks were interested in eschatology and the fate of the dead. Contact with the Egyptians and other peoples of the Middle East resulted in the Greeks becoming acquainted with the monstrous soul-bird, with its bird body and human head.

It is hoped and believed that some at least of these subjects may prove interesting and intelligible to everyone who has any acquaintance with the Greeks or birds or both. No attempt has been made in this study to attain comprehensiveness, even had it been possible or desirable. The expert can always obtain further information from Sir D'Arcy Thompson's *Glossary*, Otto Keller's *Die Antike Tierwelt* (reprinted 1963) and similar works. Birds figure prominently in both ancient Greek art and the Minoan-Mycenaean art which preceded it. Some of the more interesting examples have been assembled here, together with notes on their source and subject matter.

I am deeply indebted to Professor W. G. Arnott for directing my attention to A. Kanellis' *Catalogus Faunae Graeciae* (1969), the most up to date check list of birds in modern Greece, as well as to other important articles and for generously permitting me to make use of as yet unpublished material and the numerous inspired suggestions which I have gladly acknowledged in the text or notes. A. Lambert's 'A Specific Check List of the Birds of Greece', *Ibis*, 99 (1957), supplemented by R. J. Raines 'The Distribution of Birds in Northeast Greece in

Summer', *Ibis*, 104 (1962), 490 f., have proved invaluable. I have also profited from Miss Sylvia Benton's article 'Cattle Egrets and Bustards in Greek Art', *JHS* LXXXI (1961) and borrowed shamelessly from her photographs. I hope she may forgive the use I have made of them.

It now only remains for me to thank Professor H. H. Scullard for his careful editing and Messrs Thames & Hudson for adding this volume to their distinguished series. I would also like to acknowledge the salutary advice received from the publishers and to express my appreciation of all their painstaking research for suitable illustrations, as well as to thank the staff of the Arts Library, University College of North Wales and Mr Ian Tully of the Science Library, for their assistance in obtaining periodicals, and the Librarian of the Hellenic Society for supplying references. Without the generous help of the Librarian of the Warburg Institute I should not have been able to see extracts from *Cyranides*, while members of the staffs of the British and Ashmolean museums kindly dated vases.

Last and not least I must express my gratitude to Nerys Williams, without whose endless patience and typing skill this book would never have been printed.

Bangor, 1976 JOHN POLLARD

CHAPTER I

THE GREEK ATTITUDE TO BIRDS

It was characteristic of the ancient Greeks to view the world in human terms and never to lose an opportunity of embroidering fact, often with the most outrageous fiction, in the interests of a good story. The kind of things that might be were, in Aristotle's[1] view, both more philosophic and more worthy of serious attention than the kind of things that are, and this dictum, which refers to poetry, could equally well be applied to birds.

Aelian's[2] final comment on the purple gallinule is typical of the Greek tendency to leaven science with myth. 'It is extremely jealous and keeps an eye on married women. If it discovers that the lady of the house is an adulteress it promptly hangs itself.'

Even more sober accounts are constantly enlivened with picturesque absurdities. The grey heron, it was said, found both nesting and mating uncongenial. 'It emits shrieks during the act of union and is said to drip blood from its eyes, while its laying is attended with difficulty and distress.'[3]

Again the sight of young swallows, blinded by needles, could be restored, authorities claimed, by the application of swallow-herb to the affected organs.[4]

The assaults of the crafty, but essentially cowardly raven were grossly exaggerated. 'It does not confine its attacks solely to the smallest creatures, but assaults even the ass and the bull. Alighting on their necks it kills them and pecks out their eyes.'[5] In point of fact ravens only attack the eyes of dead beasts.

No account of blackbirds was considered complete without a reference to the fabulous white blackbirds of Mount Cyllene. 'They say that there are white blackbirds on Cyllene in Arcadia and that they are found nowhere else, that they have a wide range of notes and appear by moonlight. But if you try during the day they are difficult to catch.'[6]

Fantastic solutions were sometimes proposed of real or imaginary problems. The sentries posted by cranes, to warn them of danger, were believed to keep awake by standing on one leg 'while they firmly clasp a stone in the claws of the other which they keep suspended. So if they fall asleep the noise of the stone falling will wake them.'[7]

Equally fantastic were the theories current about birds when they became old. The upper mandible of the eagle's beak was said to grow continually more curved until it became useless and the bird died of hunger.[8]

Storks, on the other hand, were believed to achieve a curious kind of immortality: 'Whenever they reach old age they cross over to the isles of Ocean and change their appearance to the shape of men.'[9] Both young storks and bee-eaters were said, when they were fledged, to exchange roles with their parents and to feed them in the nest.[10]

Some methods proposed for trapping birds surpassed in ingenuity even the imaginative flights of the late Heath Robinson: 'Although the pelican is capable of laying its eggs in quite inaccessible places it does nothing of the kind. Instead it digs a hole in the ground and deposits its offspring in it. Seeing what it is up to they surround the spot with dried ox dung and put a spark under it. When the pelican sees the smoke its eager efforts to put the fire out by flapping its wings merely serves to set it alight.'[11]

The pelican was also said to display such parental affection that it perforated its offspring with its bill. They were restored to life, however, when sprinkled with the blood from its own self-inflicted wounds. Such, at any rate, was the account given by the Christian fathers,[12] based doubtless, at least in part, upon its proverbial piety.

Occasionally authority is lent to a fantastic ascription by the inclusion of pseudo-scientific details. So the nest of the mythical halcyon was confused, since no one had ever seen it, with actual marine phenomena.

'Its colour is reddish and its shape recalls that of long-necked gourds – there is a small opening just large enough to squeeze through, so that even if the nest is overturned the sea fails to get in.'[13]

Despite these occasional flights of fancy it is clear from Aristophanes' comedy, the *Birds*, that the contemporary Athenians were at least as well informed on ornithological matters as their modern counterparts, and probably a good deal better. In all the poet mentions seventy-nine for the most part readily identifiable species, about whose appearance and habits he is remarkably well informed. Furthermore the point of his amusing remarks would have been inevitably lost unless he had been able to assume a pretty detailed acquaintance, on the part of his audience, with the habits of the various birds that appeared as actors in the play, or were referred to in the text.

It was obviously important when a runaway slave was likened to a

francolin to know that francolins are not only adept at eluding pursuit, but that their plumage was marked like a slave who had been branded.[14]

Similarly when a man who limped was nicknamed 'Partridge' the joke would have fallen flat unless the audience had known that partridges feign lameness in order to distract attention from their nest.[15]

This is not, of course, to suggest that the average Athenian was in any sense a bird expert, but he could recognize a crow or a swallow when he saw one, even though he might not have been able to tell it from a raven or a martin. Eagles he sometimes confused with vultures, but he knew a falcon from the kestrels which nested beneath the eaves.

In addition to all the commoner birds, with which the city and its environs abounded, the Athenian citizen of the fifth century BC was also acquainted with such outlandish species as ostriches[16] and flamingoes.[17] He kept poultry,[18] pigeons[19] and geese[20] for domestic purposes, partridges[21] and quails[22] as pets or for sport and, if he could afford them, even peacocks[23] for sale or public display.

The Ancients lived closer to nature than we do even inside the city-states. Kites[24] and ravens[25] robbed the sacrifices, nightingales sang in the woods of Colonus,[26] a mile from the centre of Athens, dazzlingly hued bee-eaters flitted up and down the banks of the Cephisus[27] while hoopoes fanned their crests in the local parks and gardens.[28]

Freshwater birds and sea-birds, if less familiar to the town-dweller, were well known to the countryman and sailor.[29] Sometimes the latter would be startled by the stoop of a sea-eagle at a diver, or catch the blue gleam of a passing kingfisher.[30]

One of the most remarkable features of the ancient Greek world was the all but universal faith in omens. Since birds were one of the commonest forms of omen their activities were narrowly observed. It was a matter of experience that birds were reliable guides to changes in the weather or season. Everyone knew that the appearance of the kite[31] or swallow,[32] or the call of the cuckoo,[33] coincided with spring, while the movement southwards of cranes[34] or storks[35] indicated the arrival of autumn. But this was admittedly a far cry from regarding birds as equally infallible pointers to future changes of events in the human sphere. Nevertheless it was presumably out of such practical observations, coupled seemingly with a belief in the omniscience of birds, that the pseudo-science of augury developed.[36] 'Augur' was the name given to Roman practitioners of the art. The Greeks called such *oionistai*,[37] *oionopoloi*[38] or *oionomanteis*,[39] all of which signified 'experts in bird omens'.

Augurs differed from ornithologists in that they were exclusively concerned with the interpretation of omens and had no interest in birds as such. Nevertheless their knowledge of birds was often considerable, including as it did not only the ability to distinguish between the various species and their habits but also to recognize their cries.

In Homer, the prime source of our knowledge of Greek augury, the activities of raptorial birds loomed larger than others because they so accurately reflected events in a predatory society. Eagles and such were distinguished as *oionoi* or 'loners', though later the term was applied to any ominous bird.

The Greeks being intelligent and practical people were rarely guilty of sentimentality. At the same time their attitude to birds was curiously ambiguous. They revered them but ate them just the same.

Birds displayed for sale were an all too familiar feature of the Athenian market[40] and the trapper is the villain of Aristophanes' comedy.[41] Not even in the temples could the birds find sanctuary from the trapper's long rods, so cunningly concealed and coated with deadly bird-lime.[42]

The various methods of trapping birds with nets or decoys, limed rods or snares are described in detail by later writers, who also commented with relish on the culinary qualities of the species surveyed. Large birds like bustards were hunted on horseback,[43] but apart from cock-fighting and quail-tapping 'sport' in the modern sense was unknown in ancient Greece. Men hunted and trapped to eat because food was scarce at the best of times and a tasty francolin or even a brace of thrushes made a welcome addition to the larder.

Many birds were credited with magical powers, like the wryneck which could charm back lovers, or the woodpecker and hoopoe which were believed capable of performing 'Open Sesame' feats.[44] Others, like the eagle, were said to place a stone in their nests capable of giving both their eggs and offspring magical protection.[45]

Birds were also believed to possess medicinal value, based often on sympathetic magic. Hence since the eagle was famed for its sharpness of vision its gall, mixed with honey, was strongly recommended as a salve for weak eyes.[46] Other parts of birds were not only regarded as sovereign cures for common ailments like gout or indigestion, but also for more serious disorders like epilepsy.

Birds were frequently kept as pets. We are told that Alcibiades, the famous Athenian general, had a tame quail to which he was very attached.[47] Partridges again were so highly admired that their manner

of passing was sung by poets.[48] Ravens and other members of the crow family were popular for their intelligence and ability to perform amusing tricks. They were also excellent mimics, like the parrot which reached Greece from India.

Both pigeons and doves were favourite lovers' gifts,[49] for they possessed erotic associations as well as standing for conjugal affection and chastity.[50]

The Greeks being Greeks birds naturally played a major role in their myth and folklore. The Athenians who watched Aristophanes' play were thoroughly familiar with Aesop's fables, knowing why the lark wore a crest[51] and why the fox did ill to consort with the eagle.[52] They also knew why Apollo changed the raven black[53] and why the nightingale mourned for Itys.[54] During the spring they were accustomed to greet the first swallow[55] and to make obeisance to the kite,[56] like the modern countryman who turns and bows seven times before the new moon.

On a higher plane the Greeks were accustomed to associate certain birds with particular deities. The eagle, as Homer tells us, was an omen sent from Zeus,[57] while the owl was recognized, at least in her own city, as Athena's familiar,[58] and both the swan[59] and falcon[60] were recognized as Apollo's sacred birds. Almost all the gods and goddesses were believed to possess avian emblems and as time went on the list tended to expand.

How these associations arose is quite uncertain. Probably in many instances they were fortuitous or circumstantial, as in the case of the guinea-fowl which flocked round the temple of Artemis at Leros,[61] or the peacocks which reached Samos and were pronounced sacred to Hera.[62] Aphrodite, on the other hand, inherited her doves from oriental forbears like the Phoenician Astarte.[63] Ultimately the possession of avian familiars may derive from the Bronze Age when birds were apparently regarded as the epiphanies of deities.

The belief that the gods' presence could be inferred from that of birds would go far to explain the popularity of bird transformations in classical mythology. The amorous Zeus assumed swan form in order to deceive Leda,[64] and roused the young Hera's pity by appearing in her presence in the guise of a bedraggled cuckoo.[65] Curiously in Homer Zeus never assumes bird form, whereas Poseidon,[66] Athena,[67] Apollo[68] and Ino[69] all take the shape of suitable species.

Transformation into birds was by no means, however, confined to the immortals, for the latter when moved to pity by the enormity of

human transgressions sometimes changed both the guilty and guiltless into birds. The grim saga of Tereus ended in his being metamorphosized into a hoopoe, while his wife and sister-in-law became the nightingale and swallow.[70] Similarly Scylla was punished for parricide by being turned into a sea-bird,[71] while Meleager's mourning sisters were transformed into guinea-fowls.[72]

Birds were not only impressive and beautiful creatures, but endowed with the ineffable advantage of flight. In the course of their migrations they covered vast distances and like all great travellers were regarded as highly knowledgeable. Also their comings and goings were as mysterious as the gods' and their behaviour as whimsical and unpredictable. All this was not lost on the Greeks, who themselves resembled birds in their speed of reaction and love of change, and not seldom, as Aristophanes reminded his fellow-Athenians, in their quality of downright flightiness.[73]

With their infinite capacity for viewing everything through human eyes the Greeks were quick to recognize resemblances between men and birds, while still regarding the latter as in some sense divine. Whether they ever regarded them as gods, or, in the case of the bird-bodied human-headed sirens, as representing the souls of the dead, seems doubtful.

But the Greeks were scientists as well as poets and mythologists and during the fourth century BC, under the critical direction of Aristotle, began to investigate the place of birds in nature objectively and to classify and describe the various families and species in the light of the fresh knowledge available following Alexander's conquests.

Even then much of the treatment remained obstinately mythographical, as if the Greeks were unable or perhaps unwilling to abandon entirely the innate anthropomorphism which always distinguished them so sharply from other peoples.

The following chapter will discuss the works of the ancient writers on birds, commencing with Aristotle who founded the science of zoology and to whose painstaking researches every modern ornithologist owes an incalculable debt.

CHAPTER II

GREEK AUTHORITIES ON BIRDS

Previous to Aristotle no attempt had been made to produce a systematic work on birds. The earlier philosophers were primarily concerned with the nature of the universe, the later with ethics. Only with Aristotle was the province of philosophy extended to include the physical sciences, rejected by Socrates, and the entire conspectus of knowledge given a revolutionary biological approach.

According to the elder Pliny[1] Alexander the Great organized a gigantic research project on natural history which he personally delegated to Aristotle. However that may be, Aristotle was a pioneer in zoological studies and collected much of the material assembled in his works during a sojourn in the island of Lemnos.[2]

Of these works the nine books of the *History of Animals* is the most important from an ornithological point of view. Although no one book is devoted exclusively to birds, which are treated for the most part incidentally, some thirty chapters of Book IX describe the various species in detail. The authenticity[3] of this particular book, like other parts of the Aristotelian corpus, has been seriously questioned. Probably it was compiled from Aristotle's notes with the addition of much uncritical matter. Nevertheless, despite its inaccuracies and occasional absurdities, it still remains the best ancient work on birds and formed the basis of most later accounts and notably that of the elder Pliny.

Like all true Greeks the author of Book IX found it hard to omit a good story, whether he regarded it as fabulous or not. So he included the fable that cinnamon was obtained from the nests of the cinnamon bird[4] and that goats went blind after being sucked by nightjars.[5] Take again his account of the Scythian bird which might have come straight out of Herodotus: 'In Scythia there is a species of bird the size of a bustard. It lays two eggs but does not sit on them. Instead it hides them in the skin of a hare or a fox and leaves them to hatch. It then keeps guard from the top of a tree whenever it isn't busy hunting. If anyone climbs up it engages him in battle and beats him with its wings like eagles do.'[6]

In addition to the inclusion of such pardonable exaggerations that in their search for grubs woodpeckers sometimes hollowed out trees till

they collapsed,[7] or that shearwaters could remain submerged while a man walked a furlong,[8] fanciful enmities or friendships are frequently introduced.

The owl hates the wren because the latter breaks its eggs,[9] while the linnet hates the ass because the ass destroys its brood when browsing among the thistles.[10] The crow and the heron, on the other hand, are friends,[11] as are the sedge-warbler and the lark.[12]

Apart from such lapses the accounts given in Book IX are remarkably accurate, having regard to the limitations under which the philosopher worked, and the various species discussed are, for the most part, recognizable. The vast majority of the birds mentioned would have been familiar to the Greeks, though not always to us, and this is particularly true of the smaller species. Often the data is insufficient to permit a sure ascription or the etymology of a name defies analysis. So the *kymindis*, whose shape Sleep assumes in Homer,[13] cannot be certainly identified, neither can the *pardalos*,[14] the *kepphos*,[15] which mariners caught with sea-foam, the *poynx*[16] or the *hybris*.[17]

In effect, as might be expected, the more familiar and accessible a particular species the more accurate and recognizable the description. But when the author came to consider e.g. eagles,[18] whose shyness and remoter habitat precluded detailed study, confusion became inevitable.

Whoever was responsible for compiling the details the typical Aristotelian concern with classification and systematization is generally apparent. The sites chosen for nests are determined by the law of survival. 'Of wild birds the nests are made in accordance with the law of existence and guarantee the young birds' safety.'[19] Again 'All web-footed birds live in the vicinity of the sea, rivers and meres. For nature herself seeks what is fitting. Nevertheless many birds with parted toes also inhabit pools and marshes.'[20]

Like any Greek Aristotle noted parallels between human life and the bird world, whether it was the swallow building its nest of mud and straw, just as men make bricks,[21] or the monogamous habits of pigeons.[22]

Though most are to be found there, references to birds are by no means confined to the last book of the *History of Animals*. In Book I the philosopher lists the features which birds share with other animals or those in which they differ. Certain land animals, he says, like birds and bees, are provided with wings.[23] Some birds are poor walkers and are consequently classed as 'footless', like swifts. They are, however, excellent flyers, and the birds which most closely resemble them, namely

the swallows and martins, are also excellent flyers but poor walkers.[24] All such birds possess similar conformation and appearance.

Birds again differ in habits. Some like cranes, pigeons and swans are sociable and gregarious, whereas raptorial birds are not.[25] Their diets are varied,[26] so are their sounds,[27] habitats[28] and even their characters, so whereas cocks and partridges are salacious crows are chaste.[29]

In Book II Aristotle assesses the typical characteristics of birds. 'Birds too possess certain features in common with the animals just mentioned, I mean they all possess a head, a neck, a back, belly and a part which corresponds to the chest. They are remarkable in possessing two feet like men. The only difference is that they bend towards the rear as they do in the case of quadrupeds. They lack both hands and forelegs which are replaced by wings. Birds possess a mouth of characteristic form. For they lack both lips and teeth and are furnished with a beak. They also lack ears and nostrils.'[30]

Additional characteristics included the ability to twist the neck without moving, the possession of feathers which took the place of hair and scales in other animals, the snake-like tongue and the membrane which covers the eye. Birds also lacked a tail, though not tail-feathers, and some resembled men in their ability to utter articulate sounds.[31] Some again had spurs, but not the clawed raptores, while others sported crests, but only the cock wore a comb.[32]

Next to Book IX Book VI has most to say about birds, but is largely concerned with zoology. Some birds, like the domestic hen, lay at any time, but most during the spring. Others lay many eggs,[33] some like the pigeon[34] only two. Nests and nesting sites vary with the species and some birds dispense with nesting material altogether.[35] Eggs vary in colour. Some are pure white, marsh birds are yellowish, guinea-fowls' are mottled while kestrels' are red. They also differ in shape,[36] and in the periods which elapse between conception and laying and laying and hatching.[37] These books, like Book IX, contain errors often based on imperfect observation, e.g. 'In certain species the cocks and hens both sing, like the nightingale. However the hen stops singing when she is brooding and has young.'[38] Again Aristotle is incorrect in stating that birds' plumage remains unaffected by age (one has only to think of the brown plumage of the immature herring gull and blackbird) and although it is true that some species like the ptarmigan turn white in winter this is manifestly untrue of the three species quoted, *viz* the raven, the sparrow and the swallow.[39] Neither is there any truth in the statement that long and pointed eggs produce female chicks and the

more rounded male,[40] or that eggs are addled by thunder.[41] On the whole Aristotle discounts such manifest absurdities as the belief that the cuckoo is a transformed hawk.[42] Similarly he refuses to credit the fable that cranes on migration carried stones for ballast.[43]

Many references to birds occur in the two treatises entitled the *Parts of Animals* and the *Generation of Animals*, which also perpetuate such errors as that different species of birds can interbreed.

The pseudo-Aristotelian treatises, of varying age, contain much interesting if mainly fabulous or imaginative matter. Included among the *Marvels* are the white blackbirds of Cyllene[44] as well as the storks which saved Thessaly when overrun with snakes[45] and the curious fable, repeated from the *History of Animals*, that one pair of eaglets became an erne.[46] On the other hand the tale that birds avoided Lake Avernus is discounted on the grounds that it is frequented by swans.[47] The *Physiognomus* draws parallels between the characters of birds and men. Men with hairy shoulders never persist long in one pursuit, while those with hairy bellies are chatterers. The reason why both behave like birds is because they are heavily 'feathered'.[48] Again people with darting eyes are rapacious like hawks, while those with gleaming eyes are sensual like cocks and ravens.[49]

Theophrastus, the distinguished botanist and author of the famous *Characters*, succeeded Aristotle as head of the Lyceum. He had doubtless much to say about birds in his treatises on animals as well as in his other lost works. In the former, we are told, he divided birds into classes and noted that non-flyers, like cocks and pheasants, were able to walk from the time they were hatched.[50]

The treatise on *Weather Signs* is, in its present form, apparently a garbled version of the original work. Its interesting observations on birds as weather prophets will be discussed in chap. XII. Like Aristotle Theophrastus' judgments, at least in the form we have them, vary from the acute to the absurd. While marking the difference of note in two local species of partridge[51] and appreciating that the survival of the cuckoo depended upon the existence of suitable hosts[52] he could still apparently believe that Paphlagonian[53] partridges possessed two hearts, that cocks[54] refused to crow in moist localities, that the odour of myrrh was fatal to vultures[55] and that hawks[56] changed into cuckoos.

The same criticisms can hardly be levelled against Alexander of Myndos, of whom nothing is known except that he apparently flourished during the first half of the first century of the Christian era and was the author of a three-volume work on animals, two of which

were devoted to birds. Unfortunately his acute comments survive only in scanty fragments quoted in the *Doctors at Dinner* of Athenaeus.

As an example of his meticulous powers of observation he describes the tiny scops owl as smaller than the little owl and as having 'whitish spots on its lead-coloured plumage, while two feathers rise from its eyebrows (a characteristic feature) on each side of the temple.'[57] He also gives a valuable and accurate account of the francolin (no longer extant in southern Europe) as being larger than a partridge, of a reddish clay colour, with black marks on its back.[58] His account of the *tetrax* (black grouse?)[59] is sufficiently detailed, but hitherto the precise species referred to has eluded identification. He also succeeded in distinguishing between the domestic and the wild (tree or Spanish?) sparrow[60] as well as between the male and female quail.[61] Alexander's comments are uniquely valuable because he appears to have been a bird-watcher as well as a writer. He claims at any rate that he followed wild swans, but never heard them sing.[62] He also noted that the ring dove does not raise its head when drinking,[63] an idiosyncrasy which is mentioned by Aristotle,[64] and is silent during the winter.

Next to Aristotle in bulk, though uncritical and derivative, are the frequent references to birds in the seventeen books of Aelian's *On the Nature of Animals*. Aelian (AD 170–235) was a professional rhetorician who practised at Rome, as well as an exponent of the Stoic doctrine of universal reason as exemplified by the animal world. Though his comments on birds betray a moralizing outlook they include much interesting, though little, if any, first-hand information. His matter is derived, in the main, from Aristotle, Alexander of Myndos and his near contemporary Sostratus, the author of a major work of zoology, which has, unfortunately, failed to survive.

A typical Aelian observation is that cranes' brains possess aphrodisiac powers and that ravens' eggs[65] make the hair black (and the teeth too unless you take the precaution to seal the lips with oil).[66] The bee-eater again (he has the grace to add 'they say') flies backwards with the gaze turned behind.

Often he ruins a sound piece of observation by appending some absurd detail. So kites sweep down on the meat exposed for sale in the market, but never touch a sacrifice to Zeus.[67] Or vultures follow armies knowing that battles produce corpses, but (an absurdity already quoted from the *Marvels*) are always of the female sex.[68] The conclusion seems inevitable that Aelian, like his distinguished predecessors, knew very little about birds at first hand.

Of comparable importance is the prose paraphrase, of Byzantine date, of a poem on birds of uncertain authorship attributed either to Dionysius of Philadelphia, who apparently flourished during the reign of Hadrian (AD 117–38) or Dionysius the Periegete who lived two centuries later. It combines accurate information with antiquarian and mythical lore. The paraphrase, however, was made with fowling in view rather than ornithology.

Dionysius' views on eagles are generally orthodox. They are superior to other birds, are high flyers and endowed with such sharp eyesight that they can descry even the smallest victims when pressed by hunger. Their favourite diet is lamb, buck and hare, and they refrain from carrion unless they have killed it. They live and nest among mountains and rarely descend to the plains. But, like Aelian, Dionysius spoils his account by adding such absurd details that eagles do not drink water, but only blood and place a protective stone in their eyries. The stone possesses magical qualities and if attached to a pregnant woman will prevent abortion![69] Kites, Dionysius would have us believe, pay for their misdeeds with painful attacks of the gout![70]

The cuckoo is the harbinger of spring and makes no nest, which is true enough. It is also true that it eats the eggs of other birds, but not that it returns when the foster-parents discover the fraud to feed its own young.[71] Ignorance of the cuckoo's habits is, however, a venial offence since they were imperfectly known until recent times.

The gallinule, according to Dionysius, was so chaste that it could not even tolerate the sight of a bridegroom! In keeping with this character it never mated in public![72] As for storks, if women befriend them when wounded they return their kindness by leaving a jewel at their feet.[73]

When cranes migrate the older precede, which is true of many species including geese and cuckoos, but hardly to prevent them growing weary by endeavouring to keep up with the younger birds! If one grew tired the birds on either side endeavoured to support it or even to carry it on their backs![74] Though elephants are known to support a wounded member of the herd there is no evidence that cranes do the same.

Finally the curious iambics of Phile dedicated to the east Roman emperor Michael Palaeologus (AD 1261–82) add little or nothing to ancient ornithological knowledge. They represent a rehash of earlier accounts and include such absurdities as that doves are attracted and captured by pop-music, with the curiously contemporary rider that it also has a baneful effect on young girls![75] Peacocks, according to Phile,

are highly conscious of praise and become depressed if they notice wrinkles in their feet![76]

Athanaeus (AD 200), author of *Doctors at Dinner*, is an invaluable indirect source of information about birds, often culled from works no longer extant. These include, in addition to Alexander of Myndos' books on animals, lost works of Aristotle, plays of the Old and Middle Comedy, Callimachus' prose work on birds and innumerable minor histories. Many of these fragments will be quoted in the following pages.

CHAPTER III

BIRDS OF THE TOWN AND VILLAGE

CROW (KORONE)

The Greek crow is the hooded crow (*corvus cornix*) which is distinguished from the carrion crow by its grey back and belly. It has a curious range extending from northern through eastern to southern Europe, excluding Spain, though ornithologists separate the Mediterranean race as *corvus cornix sardonius*.[1] That it was also the Greek crow in ancient times seems certain from Aristophanes' reference to 'grey crows'.[2] There is no evidence that the carrion crow (*corvus corone*) of the British islands (excluding Ireland and the Isle of Man) north-western Europe and Spain was ever resident in Greece. Pliny[3] comments on the jet black plumage of the Spanish bird, which contrasted with that of the hooded. The hooded crow is also found in Egypt and Aristotle[4] is correct in stating that it did not differ in size from the Greek crow.

The crow was always distinguished from the raven, though both birds are described by Aristotle as preferring to live in towns.[5] It was presumably from its familiarity to town-dwellers, as well as its augural reputation, that in Aristophanes' *Birds* Peisthetaerus employs it as a guide. Neither bird, of course, frequents cities today, but in ancient times city life was more primitive and rustic and both crows and ravens, like the medieval London kites, would have been attracted to the middens as well as the sacrifices.

'Along the shore it is a constant scavenger', says Coward[6] of the British hooded crow. Aristotle[7] makes the same observation. 'Crows also feed on such animal life as they find cast up on the shore, for the birds are omnivorous.'

The crow's proverbial longevity is mentioned both by Aristophanes[8] and Plutarch.[9] 'Don't you know that the cawing crow outlives five generations of men?' Peisthetaerus asks the bird chorus, a period which Plutarch, quoting Hesiod, extended to nine.

Of the crow's nesting habits Aristotle has this to say. 'Their young are born helpless and blind',[10] which is, of course, true of all the Passeriformes. 'Only the females brood and continue to do so throughout the whole period. The males bring them food and feed them.'[11] Most birds take no interest in their young once they have left the nest,

but not so the crow. 'She looks after them for a considerable time, flying beside them and feeding them even when they can fly.'[12] The chicks were hatched legs first, according to Dionysius.[13]

According to the mystical and erroneous account of Horapollo[14] (fourth century AD) the crow, like the pigeon, laid only two eggs. In fact it lays from four to six. The story is also repeated that it mated for life, which is certainly true of the raven.

Aelian[15] says owls were hostile to crows and gives the following absurd reason. 'Since the owl is its foe and plots during the night to seize its eggs, it serves it the same during the daytime knowing that the owl is then handicapped by weakness of vision.' For this traditional tale see chap. XXI.

The crow is ignored by Homer, but is referred to by Hesiod[16] as a bird of ill omen (see chap. XIII). It was also famed as a weather prophet (see chap. XII). For the Crow Song and its place in fable see chap. XXI.

RAVEN (CORAX)

The raven (*corax corax*) which has a wide range throughout northern, western, eastern and southern Europe, is still very common in the more mountainous regions of Greece. Aristotle's statement that it was a city resident would now be inaccurate.[17] Nevertheless it still haunts the outskirts of the remoter towns and villages, and is usually to be seen near Sparta.[18]

It is larger, as Aristotle[19] says, than the Egyptian brown-necked raven (*corax ruficollis*) which, according to Aelian,[20] plagued mariners for food and, if denied, snapped their gear! It is also true that the raven is a sedentary bird and does not disappear, like migrants, during the winter.[21] It does not, however, turn grey or white during a period of hard frost as the philosopher[22] supposed and indeed 'to see a white raven' was a proverbial phrase for an unlikely event.[23]

Despite its sombre magnificence the raven with its resonant croak is strangely ignored by Homer, though he mentions other carrion feeders like vultures and lammergeyers. The bird had an evil reputation and the elegiac poet Theognis (sixth century BC) lamented that 'everything has gone to the ravens'[24] (we should say 'to the dogs') while the tragedian Aeschylus described the curse of the house of Tantalus 'perched like a raven on a corpse'.[25]

Its habit of pecking out the eyes of dead creatures is mentioned by Aristophanes. If men are so stupid as to continue reverencing the gods of Olympus, instead of the birds, then Peisthetaerus threatens 'Let the

ravens pluck out the eyes of the oxen with which they plough the earth and the sheep's too to prove their superiority.'[26] The raven was not only a scavenger, but often guilty of sacrilege. Aeschylus describes a suitor in the *Suppliant Maidens* as 'reverencing the altars no more than ravens do.'[27]

The raven's bass croak is so distinctive that it is hard to understand why Theophrastus refers to the bird varying its note as a sign of coming rain.[28] Like all the crow family it was an excellent mimic and a favourite pet[29] (see chap. XV).

Its habit of caressing its mate with its beak persuaded the Greeks that the birds actually mated by kissing. But Aristotle will have none of it. 'Some maintain that both ravens and the ibis mate through the beak and this was the view of Anaxagoras and other physicists. But they are in error because the mating of ravens is rarely observed, whereas caressing one another with the beaks is of common occurrence among the crow family.'[30] Nevertheless, according to Dionysius, the female does not permit mating until the male has first croaked a nuptial song![31]

Hesiod said that the raven was long-lived like the crow, 'outlasting three generations of stags'.[32] Athenaeus (second century AD), voluminous author of *Doctors at Dinner*, also stated that it paired for life.[33] Both statements are in accordance with modern opinion.

Aristotle's comments on the ravens' numbers and nesting habits are generally accurate. 'Where space is restricted and where food is insufficient for more, a single pair is the rule. As for their chicks, they eject them from the nest as soon as they are able to fly and then drive them from the neighbourhood. The raven lays four or five eggs.'[34]

Aelian says that when the raven becomes too old to feed its offspring it offers itself for food.[35] The myth recalls the similar tale about the pelican, which restored its young to life with its own blood. (See chap. XXI).

For the raven as a weather prophet and bird of omen see chap. XII and XIII. For fables about the raven see chap. XXI.

JACKDAW (KOLOIOS)

The jackdaw (*corvus monedula*) is resident throughout Europe and was and is a familiar sight in the towns and villages of Greece. Hence Euelpides takes it to guide him to the city of the Birds to match Peisthetaerus' crow. Its gregarious habits are mentioned by Homer[36] in conjunction with the starling. Hence the proverb, quoted by Aristotle, 'Daw always sits by daw!'[37]

Its distinctive chirrup, more nasal than that of the much rarer chough, is referred to in disparaging terms by Pindar, as is its lowland habitat. 'The chattering daws inhabit low regions', snapped the greatest of the lyric poets with a side-glance at less gifted rivals,[38] and it is true that the sociable jackdaw tends to avoid remote or mountainous districts. Others refer to its 'croak' or general rowdiness, which is characteristic of the bird when excited.[39] In Lamia two flocks of jackdaws appeared to be at war and the noise they made was indescribable.[40]

Lucian refers to the 'rascal daw',[41] but its reputation as a thief, and in particular as a thief of shiny objects, belongs rather to Latin literature[42] where its name *monedula* was derived from *moneta* money. Aristotle distinguished the jackdaw from the chough, and an unidentified species known as the 'wolf', as the 'altar robber',[43] a reputation which it shared with the raven,[44] but, though generally omnivorous, it is not a carrion feeder.

Its sociable habits led to its being easily trapped (see chap. XI). But man has rarely been the jackdaw's enemy and more often its friend. Indeed the Veneti, according to the historian Theopompus (fourth century B C) fed the birds with barley cakes in order to bribe them not to dig up the seed after the corn had been sown. Lycus, the historian of Rhegium (second century B C) adds picturesque details. The inhabitants displayed scarlet thongs in the hope of scaring the birds away. Envoys were then despatched to the neighbouring districts inviting the birds to return and accept their offerings. If the daws agreed to the compact all was well. If not the people faced starvation.[45]

The Thessalians, Illyrians and Lemnians regarded jackdaws as benefactors, since they ate the eggs and the young of the locust, and fed them at the public expense.[46]

For the jackdaw as a weather prophet and bird of omen see chaps XII and XIII. It also figures in fable for which see chap. XXI.

ROOK (SPERMOLOGOS)

Whether the rook (*corvus frugilegus*) has a place in a book on Greek birds is debatable. It does not appear to be resident in Greece today and if it is at all it is only in the extreme north. Its present range includes north-western and eastern Europe, but it is only a winter vagrant in the south.

Spermologos seed-picker, could refer to many birds, though the dictionary of Hesychius defines it as a 'form of daw'. Little again can be made of Aristophanes' reference to 'the tribes of seed-pickers that

swiftly fly uttering a soft call.'[47] The ancient commentator on the passage actually took the birds for cranes! The later reference in the *Birds* to 'clouds of sparrows and seed-pickers gulping down the seed from the fields' is equally uninformative.[48] Most probably the poet was using the word in the most general sense for farm pests like daws and starlings. So when Demetrius Poliorcetes boasted that he would scatter his foes like a flock of 'seed-pickers' he may not have been referring specifically to the rook.[49] On the other hand Alexander of Myndos says the 'seed-picker' is the same size as a grouse, which might suggest a rook.[50] It was also said to be good eating.[51] Young rooks were much prized by the Fat Boy in Pickwick, but it seems more likely that the authorities had some other bird in mind. Aristotle classifies the 'seed-picker', without further comment, among the worm-eating birds.[52]

On the whole the evidence that the rook was known in ancient Greece is too vague to merit acceptance.

HOUSE SPARROW (STROUTHOS)

The house sparrow (*passer domesticus*) is found throughout Europe, with the exception of Italy where it is replaced by the Italian sparrow (*passer italiae*). It was presumably common in ancient Greece, though *strouthos* was used for 'bird' in general including the ostrich which was distinguished as the 'big bird'. Alexander of Myndos separated the domestic from the wild bird, by which he might have meant the Spanish sparrow (*passer hispaniolensis*) which is found both in southern Italy and Greece,[53] tree sparrow (*passer montanus*) or rock sparrow (*petronia petronia*) which breeds in the far north and winters in the south.

Homer describes a sparrow's nest attacked by a snake (see chap. XIII). The bird was clearly not a house sparrow, living as it did out in the open with its nest in a plane tree, but for the poet the event, not the species, was important.

Sappho's description of Aphrodite being drawn through the air by a team of *strouthoi* is ambiguous.[55] Since *strouthoi* meant 'birds' as well as sparrows the poetess could have been referring to swans, for the goddess appears riding on a swan on a Greek cup in London.[56] On the other hand the house sparrow was a byword for lasciviousness and Athenaeus interpreted the reference in this sense.

'Sparrows are given to "riding",' so Terpsicles claims that those who eat sparrows are prone to sexual indulgence. Possibly then Sappho was speaking with knowledge when she describes Aphrodite as 'riding' in a

car drawn by sparrows. 'For the creature is given to "riding" and is prolific.'[57]

Sparrows frequented buildings of all kinds, including temples, and so were regarded as sacred. For sacred sparrows at Branchidae[58] and Athens[59] see chap. XVI.

The *strouthos* was a worm-eater, according to Aristotle, which the house sparrow is not.[60] But the philosopher's physiological descriptions could suit any small bird. 'Neither its throat nor crop is broad, though its stomach is. It has appendages, but everything is small.'[61] 'The cocks disappear in winter.'[62] The latter statement is curious and apparently based on the erroneous view that male sparrows were short-lived. 'Some say that the male sparrows live only for a year, arguing that they appear in early spring without the black beard, but acquire it later, as though none of the males from the previous season had survived. They also maintain that the females live longer, since they are trapped with younger birds, and are distinguished from them by the hard shell round their beaks.'[63]

It is clear from this description that Aristotle was unaware of the duller plumage which the cock sparrow assumes in winter and the beardlessness of immature birds. Alexander of Myndos makes the same odd observation about the horn-like appearance of the hen sparrow's bill.[64] It presumably refers to the lighter colour of the latter's beak in comparison with the blue-black of the mature males.

Sparrows are great bathers, as Aristotle remarked. 'Some birds take both dust and water baths, like the pigeon and the sparrow.'[65] The Middle Comic poet Ephippus compared the welcoming kisses of a courtesan to the open mouths of fledgling sparrows.[66] Aristotle comments on the speed of the sparrow's mating.[67] The young, like those of crows, are born helpless and blind while the bird is extremely prolific.[68] At least three broods are usual in Britain and five or six eggs is the usual clutch. Aristotle says eight.[69] The bird was rightly described as 'quarrelsome' by Nicander of Colophon (second century BC).[70]

For the sparrow as a weather prophet and in augury see chaps XII and XIII.

SWALLOW (CHELIDON)

The Ancients did not distinguish the swallow (*hirundo rustica*) from either the house martin (*delichon urbica*) or sand martin (*riparia riparia*) and although the former is a favourite subject of art no representations of martins are known. A German ornithologist[71] found the martin in

former days the commoner bird in Greece, and the many descriptions of nests, which clearly refer to this species, and not to the swallow, suggest that it was common in ancient times.

As a harbinger of spring the swallow was especially welcome. 'It signifies the arrival of the best season of the year,' says Aelian,[72] 'is friendly towards man and delights to share his roof, and comes unsummoned and departs when it lists. Men welcome it according to Homer's guest law, which bids them welcome and be kind to the guest and when he wishes to depart to permit him to do so.'

Spring and the swallow were constantly associated by the poets from Hesiod[73] onwards. When Arcturus shines at dusk 'Pandion's shrill wailing daughter the swallow appears to men, at the first advent of spring', (though 'shrill wailing' better suits the swift). 'Blue swallow announce the glory of sweet-scented spring', sang Simonides.[74] 'When the swallow of spring sits and twitters', said Aristophanes[75] in the *Peace*, while in the *Knights* the sausage-seller boasts how he outwitted the butchers by chanting, 'Look, children! Don't you see? The new season – the swallow!'[76] For when the swallow arrived it was time (in Greece!) to sell your woollen shift and buy a light summer dress. Artemidorus,[77] the author of a lost treatise on bird-lore, as well as works on dreams and palmistry, observes that the swallow's arrival is a reminder that winter is over and that now it is time to work – a comment more suited to Hesiod.

The European swallow migrates to central and southern Africa. Herodotus[78] confused it with the Egyptian swallow (*hirundo rustica savignii*), which was said to be resident all the year round.

Aristotle[79] wrongly included the swallow among birds of 'one uniform colour', though it resembled the monochrome swift in its mastery of flight and awkwardness on the ground.[80] It is also carnivorous,[81] subsisting on flies. It differs from the *cypselus*, which is possibly the crag martin (*ptyonoprogne rupestris*), or rather from the house martin, in possessing unfeathered feet. 'It is hard in fact to distinguish between the two birds, except that the *kypselos* has feathered feet.'[82]

Aristotle[83] has left a detailed description of the nest which, in the case of the swallow was placed on a beam in a barn or outbuilding or even inside a chimney. 'It weaves straw with mud and, if mud be lacking, it wets itself and rolls its wings in the dust. Furthermore it makes a nest of straw, as men do, with a hard base and fashioned precisely to its size.' He next proceeds to describe the method employed by swallows when feeding their young. 'Both parents share in the work (

of gathering food for their offspring. They give to each noting by experience the one which has already been served, so that none is fed twice. At first they themselves remove the droppings, but when they grow up they teach the nestlings to turn round and throw them out.'

The swallow's, or rather the martin's, affection for its offspring was referred to by Theocritus:[84] 'When a swallow has brought morsels for her children under the eaves swiftly back she flies to fetch some more.' There are further references in the *Greek Anthology* where such phrases as 'under the eaves'[85] recur and must be assigned to the house martin, whereas 'under the roof'[86] is a proper description of a swallow's nest. Aelian[87] is correct in stating that the swallow lays a clutch of five eggs, though no ancient authority mentions the colour which is speckled in the former case and white in the case of the martin. Aristotle[88] mentions a second brood, in fact a third is quite usual. When cockroaches attacked the eggs the mother birds were said to protect them with parsley leaves![89] It was also believed that the swallows' method of copulation differed from that of other birds, and that Tereus was to blame![90] (see chap. XIX).

According to Oppian[91] (third century AD), the author of a poem on fishing, if a snake killed her young (and there are modern instances of this happening) the mother bird was said to commit suicide by squeezing into the snake's jaws.

The swallow's twitter was regarded as witless and barbarous by the Greeks, despite its undoubted charm. 'Kotilas' – Prattler – was the name given to it by the lyric poets Anacreon[92] and Simonides,[93] as well as the comic poet Strattis.[94] 'But if she be not like the swallow,' says Clytemnestra of Cassandra, the Trojan captive, with heavy sarcasm, 'mistress of an unknown barbarous speech, speaking within the limits of her understanding, I shall persuade her with my words.'[95] So Aristophanes[96] likens the incomprehensible gabble of the Triballian in the *Birds* to the twittering of swallows. The same poet refers in the *Frogs* to the swallows' twitter, which is difficult to follow until translated 'from the Thracian'.[97] Nicostratus,[98] one of the poets of the *Anthology*, observes that if to chatter continually were a sign of wisdom swallows could be said to be wiser than men. Philemon,[99] the comic poet, rebuked a chatterbox by reminding her that the swallow confined its talk to the summer! Again Pythagoras' refusal to welcome a swallow into his house was explained by Hesychius[100] as aimed against excessive talkers.

For the swallow as a prophet of spring and in augury see chaps XII

and XIII. For the swallow in myth see chap. XIX; in folklore and fable see chap. XXI.

The red-rumped swallow (*hirundo daurica*) is also resident in Greece, but was not apparently distinguished from the common species.

CRAG MARTIN (KYPSELOS)

The crag martin (*ptyonoprogne rupestris*) is confined to southern Europe and inhabits cliffs, both sea and inland, as well as gorges. It sometimes nests in towns and has been observed in a street in Rhodes. As Aristotle[101] says 'it closely resembles the swallow and may only be distinguished by its feathered feet.' In fact it differs in colour, being brown like a sand martin with an untypical wedge-shaped tail. The crag martin nests in colonies in suitable localities as Aristotle describes. 'They rear their young in long compartments made of mud, with an entrance just large enough to get in and out. They build their nests under cover, under a rock or cave, protected from men and animals.'

One ancient commentator[102] mistook it for a bat, a natural error, since the bird has a curious drooping flight.

SWIFT (APOUS – FOOTLESS) AND PALLID SWIFT

Aristotle describes the swift (*micropus apus*) quite correctly as a 'poor walker', since its wings are so long that it is incapable of becoming airborne except from a height, and also as a 'fine flyer'. He adds, enigmatically, that it is a bird 'of all seasons', which, of course, it is not, since it migrates in winter. But he is correct if he means that it appears at 'all hours', as the bird is continually on the wing, and only descends to its nest or at night to rest, and not even always then since there is some evidence that it can and does sleep on the wing.[103] Elsewhere Aristotle confuses the swift with the crag martin, though only the swift and the house martin have feathered feet.[104] The crag martin has tufts of hair at the base of the hind toe. He does not distinguish the common swift from the very similar pallid swift (*apus pallidus*).

ALPINE SWIFT (DREPANIS – SICKLE-WING)

More impressive than the foregoing is the larger white-bellied Alpine swift (*apus melba*) which, though not a town-dweller, is frequently on view over seaside resorts, if there are suitable cliffs in the vicinity. There is, or was until recently, a big colony near Nauplia.[105] Aristotle likens it to the swift but confesses that 'all these birds resemble

one another in habits and plumage and in their appearance to one another. The swift is on view at all seasons, but the Alpine swift only after summer rain. Then it is seen and trapped but is otherwise rare.'[106] If the *drepanis* is the Alpine swift, and this is by no means certain, it is at any rate true that it sometimes appears after rain, though it is certainly local and absent from some areas. Why anyone should wish to trap it is a mystery, as is the means employed.

THRUSH (CICHLE)

The song thrush (*turdus philomelos*) is only a winter bird of passage in southern Greece and the Ancients were more familiar with the mistle thrush (*turdus viscivorus*) and apparently also the migratory fieldfare (*turdus pilaris*) and redwing (*turdus musicus*). Aristotle distinguished three species of thrushes. 'One is the mistle thrush. It feeds only on mistletoe and resin and is about the size of a jay. The second is the *trichas* (song thrush or fieldfare). It possesses a shrill voice [in the *Acharnians* Aristophanes[107] wonders which sings sweeter the cicada or the thrush] and is the size of a blackbird. The third is the smallest and least spotted and called by some the *illas*.' It has been identified with the redwing.[108]

The harsh note of the mistle thrush was likened to a harlot's chortle.[109] Aristotle[110] describes the thrush later as being as large as a dipper (*pygargos*, literally 'white-rump') and as larger than a shrike (*malacocraneus*). During the summer it is spotted round the neck, while in winter it is dappled. It does not, however, suffer a seasonal change of voice.[111] Here there would appear to be some confusion with the fieldfare, which has bolder spots than the mistle thrush, and visits Greece in the winter. Both the fieldfare and redwing are at present rare visitors to Greece, but may once have been commoner. Aristophanes, at any rate, refers to a 'flock of thrushes',[112] and wintering fieldfares and redwings migrate in large numbers.

Aristotle's[113] description of thrushes' nests is also curiously referable to the fieldfare. 'Thrushes make nests like swallows out of mud in the tops of trees, in rows and close together, forming a kind of chain.' It is true that both song and mistle thrushes employ mud in building their nests, as Alexander of Myndos[114] also observed, and that the mistle thrush often favours a site near the top of a tree. But only fieldfares nest in colonies, often in association with redwings. Latterly the fieldfare has extended its range southward to Scotland and central Europe, so it is possible that it formerly bred in Greece. It is, of course, also possible

that Aristotle[115] was in error. He at any rate perpetuated the heresy that the thrush hibernated like the blackbird.

Thrushes were frequently trapped for food even in Homer's[116] time. The poet likens the wicked hand-maidens strung up in a line to 'thrushes caught in a net with their wings drooping'.

For the thrush as food see chap. XI.

BLACKBIRD (KOSSYPHOS)

The blackbird (*turdus merula*) is resident throughout Europe, and was familiar to the ancient Greeks. Aristotle[117] describes it as rather larger than the middle or lesser spotted woodpeckers, as well as the blue rock thrush[118] and the starling.[119] He refers to the autumn moult as well as the change of song. 'Many birds change colour and note in accordance with the season, like the blackbird which turns yellowish instead of black. It also changes its note, for whereas it sings during the summer, during the winter it makes a noisy chatter.'[120] In fact the male blackbird does not change colour, though immature birds are dusky. Dionysius[121] too was confused by the difference in colour between the two sexes, believing that there were actually two species. 'Some are completely black, while the others are distinguished by their yellow bills and propensity to sing.' He is wrong on both counts unless 'black', i.e. dark, refers to the hen bird.

The blackbird's beautiful song did not go unremarked by the poets. Theocritus[122] refers to the 'blackbirds in spring trilling their varied notes in clear voiced melody'. Aristotle[123] mentions its habit of early nesting. ' Wild birds, as has been stated, mate and lay only once a year, but the swallow and the blackbird lay twice. The blackbird's first brood is destroyed by the weather (for it is the earliest nester of all birds) but it successfully rears the second.' It is true that blackbirds are early nesters, but nothing like as early as the raven and the heron, at least in Britain. His description of the nest is perfectly accurate. 'The nests of the blackbird and the jay follow a common pattern' similar to that of the greenfinch which provides a lining of wool and hair.[124]

The extraordinary myth that white blackbirds were found on Mount Cyllene has never been explained. White blackbirds, of course, are relatively common as a sport, like black rabbits, but only as individuals, not as a race.

Here is Pausanias'[125] account: 'Cyllene also boasts the following marvel. It is the habitat of white blackbirds. Those so named by the Boeotians belong to a somewhat different species, and do not sing. I

have seen swan-eagles, so called because their whiteness most resembles a swan's [possibly Egyptian vultures] in the vicinity of the lake called Tantalus on Mount Sipylus, and I know that private individuals have acquired specimens of white wild boars, and Thracian white bears. As for white hares and deer, the former are native to Libya, and I have seen white deer in Rome, and I was quite amazed at the sight. But it did not occur to me to enquire either the countries or islands of their origin. I have made these observations concerning the blackbirds on Cyllene so that there may be no doubt about what has been said respecting their colour.'

The description certainly does not fit the ring ouzel (*turdus torquatus*) which is only a winter visitor to Greece, nor the rare snowfinch which has also been suggested. The chances are that the white blackbirds of Cyllene are a myth, whose origin cannot now be discovered. Aristotle[126] was familiar with the tale and states quite factually that the birds are found on Cyllene and nowhere else. The ornithologist Lindemeyer[127] claimed that he had seen the birds in the middle of last century, but there have been no other references in modern times.

The blackbird was highly esteemed as food and the methods employed to capture it are described in chap. XI.

ROBIN (ERITHAKOS)

The robin (*erithacus rubecula*), though widespread through most of Europe, is strictly a winter visitor to Greece. Its close resemblance to the redstart (*phoenicurus phoenicurus*) is mentioned by Aristotle,[128] though in somewhat mystical terms. 'The robin and the so-called redstart change into one another. The robin is a winter bird, while the redstarts are summer birds, and they scarcely differ from one another apart from their colour.'

Elsewhere he classed it correctly with the 'grub-eaters'.[129] The redstart is not otherwise referred to, but Aristotle is right in describing it by implication as a migratory bird.

For the robin as a weather prophet see chap. XII. It played no part in folklore in ancient times, as it did in modern Europe.[130]

WREN (TROCHILOS, ORCHILOS)

The wren (*troglodytes troglodytes*) is found throughout Europe. It is described with rare accuracy in an ancient note[131] as 'almost the smallest of all birds apart from the so-called kinglet. It resembles the kinglet in most respects, apart from the golden feathers on its brow. The wren is

a little larger than the kinglet and somewhat darker, always has an erect tail and is lightly spotted with white behind. It is more noisy than the kinglet, while some are somewhat speckled on the extreme edge of the wing. It undertakes only short flights (in fact like both the kinglet, i.e. the goldcrest or the firecrest, it frequently crosses the sea) but its physical strength is remarkable. I believe the species is observed everywhere in winter.' Aristotle adds the information that it inhabits copses and holes (hence *troglodytes* – hole dweller)! It is hard to catch, skulks out of sight, is gentle in character, finds sustenance easily and is industrious to a degree. 'Two of its nicknames are "Old Man" and "King".'[132]

For the wren as a bird of omen see chap. XIII. Its folklore, like the robin's is considerable in modern Europe, but not in ancient Greece.[133]

The goldcrest (*regulus regulus*) is comparatively rare in Greece. The firecrest (*regulus ignicapillus*) is more widely spread north of the Peloponnese. The kinglet (*basilikos*) is probably the latter. Aristotle[134] calls it *tyrannos* (king) and describes it as 'scarcely bigger than a locust, with a crest of bright red gold, and in general a beautiful and dainty little bird.'

TITMOUSE (AIGITHALOS OR AIGITHOS)

At least nine species of titmouse are resident in Greece, but Aristotle[135] distinguishes only three varieties. 'There are three kinds of titmice. The biggest is the finch tit, which is roughly the same size as a chaffinch. The second is the mountain tit which inhabits mountains and possesses a long tail. The third closely resembles the other two and differs only in size, being the smallest of the three.'

The 'finch tit' is clearly the great tit (*parus major*) which is common and has no rivals for size. The second species is more baffling. The Latin name for the willow tit (*parus montanus*) suggests that it frequents hilly districts, which it may do in hot countries, but certainly not in Britain. The crested tit (*parus cristatus*) too prefers birch woods on mountain sides, as does the larger sombre tit (*parus lugubris*). But all three lack the distinctive tail of the long-tailed tit (*aegithalus caudatus*) to which Aristotle must be referring. Though not associated with mountainous habitats in Britain the long-tailed tit apparently favours higher elevations on the continent. The smallest tit could be the blue (*parus caeruleus*) or the coal (*parus ater*) tit. Both, however, are said to be rare in Greece, so perhaps the sombre tit is meant. Tits are remarkably tame and confiding, hence the proverbial expression 'cheekier than a tit'.[136]

Aristotle's[137] description of the nest of the *akanthylis* apparently refers to that of the penduline tit (*remiz pendulinus*) which is a remarkable work of art.

'The nest of the penduline tit is a marvel of skill, for it is woven like a ball of flax with a tiny entrance.'

Tits are classed by Aristotle[138] as 'grub-feeders' with more accuracy than the sparrow. But he is wrong in his belief that they attack bees along with the bee-eaters and the swallow, a curious heresy which is repeated by other authorities.[139] Aristotle[140] comments on the large number of eggs laid by the titmouse. 'The titmouse, they say, lays a very large number of eggs. In fact some would go so far as to maintain that the number of eggs laid by the so-called "black-headed" species is second only to that of the Libyan sparrow. Seventeen are on record, but it lays more than twenty. They say that the number is always odd. This bird too nests in trees and feeds on grubs.'

The number of eggs mentioned by Aristotle would not be an exaggeration in the case of the blue tit. 'The number of the clutch is often very large,' says Coward,[141] 'from twelve to over twenty are sometimes recorded.'

For myths of metamorphosis into titmice see chap. XIX.

CHAFFINCH (SPIZA)

The chaffinch (*fringilla coelebs*) ranges throughout Europe including Greece. The ancient name *spiza* means 'chirper' and was applied indifferently to several birds. However its frequency in comparisons suggests that it was more often applied to the chaffinch. Aristotle[142] describes the wryneck as 'rather bigger than a chaffinch', the great tit as 'about the size of a chaffinch'[143] and the wall-creeper again as 'somewhat bigger'.[144] He classes it among the grub-eaters,[145] which is certainly true in spring and summer, and makes the anomalous observation that it prefers warm places in summer and cold in winter in contradistinction to the turtle dove.[146] It is certainly a winter visitor to this country, but if the weather is severe it moves further west. Probably Aristotle meant that the chaffinch accommodated itself to the temperature, which is true of resident birds, though perhaps the majority migrate.

STARLING (PSAR)

Flocks of starlings (*sturnus vulgaris*), frequently of immense size, are found throughout Europe today. The birds flock and migrate in

winter, but mainly in northern Greece. Nevertheless it was familiar to Aristotle[147] who describes it quite accurately as 'speckled and the same size as the blackbird'. Its depredations in the fields are referred to by the poets of the *Anthology*,[148] for it had a bad reputation, like the crane and the jackdaw, with which latter it is associated by Homer.[149] 'Like a falcon scattering daws and starlings' is the poet's description of Patroclus attacking the Trojans. The Achaeans again flee before Hector and Aeneas 'like a cloud of daws and starlings'.[150] We cannot, of course, be sure that Homer is not referring to the rose-coloured pastor (*sturnus roseus*) which is commoner in the east.

For the starling as food see chap. XI; in augury see chap. XIII; as a pet see chap. XV.

LITTLE OWL (GLAUX)

The little grey owl (*athene noctua*) with its barred and speckled plumage and big blazing eyes inhabited, as it still does,[151] the rocky bluffs and acropoles of the ancient cities of Greece. So common was it in the capital city of Attica that a needless task was described, like our proverbial 'carrying coals to Newcastle', as taking 'owls to Athens'.[152] For the owl was not only associated with the city's guardian goddess Athena (see chap. XVI) but appeared on the coinage and local ware.

Aristotle[153] says 'Little owls and long-eared owls together with all the other birds that cannot see during the day, seek their prey by hunting at night, but not throughout the whole night, but during the early evening and at dawn. They hunt mice, lizards, beetles and such.' Aristophanes[154] adds locusts, while the hostility of small birds was doubtless aroused by its fondness for their offspring.[155] The nuisance caused by its hooting is mentioned by Aristophanes. 'My nerves are completely wrecked by the hooting of the owls which keep me awake', complains one of the women in the *Lysistrata*.[156] It was said that crows tended to avoid the Acropolis at Athens because of the hostility of the owls,[157] and Peisthetaerus in the *Birds* arms himself with a pot against their threatened assaults.[158]

For the use of the owl as a decoy in catching birds see chap. XI; for the owl as a bird of omen see chap. XIII; as a weather prophet see chap. XII; as a sacred bird see chap. XVI.

KITE (IKTINOS)

As in medieval London the big red kite (*milvus milvus*) was commonly seen in summer scavenging about the cities and villages of ancient

Greece. Though its presence was welcomed as a sign of spring and men turned somersaults in its honour, its bold thieving habits were proverbial. Sophocles[159] describes it 'screaming as it swept up the flesh', for it was a constant attendant at sacrifices.[160] In Elis it robbed men in the city centre,[161] as it still does in Africa and further east. 'It is admitted', says Jackson,[162] speaking of the African race (*milvus migrans parasiticus*) 'that it has been seen to carry off a hot mutton chop from a gridiron as it was being brought from the kitchen . . . But in a long experience it was never once seen to carry off, or even swoop at a chicken.' However Dionysius,[163] after describing it as the most shameless of birds, accuses it of this very crime. Meinertzhagen[164] speaking of the black kite (*milvus migrans*) which migrates to the Greek islands, but was not distinguished from the red kite by the Ancients, agrees with Jackson. 'It has been known to snatch a beef-steak from a soldier's plate while he was feeding on a barrack-room veranda – Poultry robbing is not usual.' Herodotus states that the Egyptian kite (*milvus migrans aegypticus*) does not migrate, but this is doubtful since all kites are subject to local movement, including the tropical races.[165] Aristotle[166] describes the kite as 'about the same size as the buzzard'. In fact it is considerably larger. He also states, somewhat illogically, that it lays 'at most two eggs, though it sometimes produces three offspring.'[167] According to the account given in the *History of Animals* kites went into hiding during the winter. The reason adduced for this curious myth was that they were observed 'flying out of such places when they first appear.'[168]

For further myths and fables about kites see chap. XXI.

KESTREL (KENCHRIS)

One of the best known birds in modern Greece is the migratory and gregarious lesser kestrel (*falco naumanni*) which arrives in flocks in spring. The common kestrel (*falco tinnunculus*) is a resident, but less common and vocal. Lessers were nesting under the eaves of the houses in Tripolis in 1949, and busily gliding about the streets in pursuit of the insects on which it mainly feeds.[169] Aristotle[170] comments on the number of eggs laid by the kestrel. 'All birds of prey are unprolific with the exception of the kestrel, which is the most prolific of the birds of prey. Four eggs have been counted and it lays even more.' In fact the kestrel has been known to lay as many as six or even seven eggs, which exceeds the number laid by the hobby and merlin but not the sparrow hawk.[171] It was not unique in laying red eggs, as Aristotle[172]

imagined, for those of the hobby and peregrine falcon are also red, though few in his day could have seen them. The kestrel was said to drink less than the other birds of prey. Indeed Aelian was of the opinion that it never drank at all![173]

It is a common sight to see hawks of all kinds gorging on the locust swarms in East Africa. So in Greece swarms of kestrels attack locusts and grasshoppers whenever they appear. In the *Birds* Peisthetaerus swears that once the birds replace the gods the locust pest will be a thing of the past. 'First the locusts shall not devour their vine-blossoms, for a squadron of owls and kestrels shall destroy them.'[174]

For a metamorphosis into a kestrel see chap. XIX.

CHAPTER IV

BIRDS OF THE COUNTRYSIDE

NIGHTINGALE (AEDON)

The nightingale (*luscinia megarhynchus*) is still plentiful in spring in the more remote and wooded parts of Greece, and in particular in the coastal regions below the slopes of Mount Olympus.[1] In classical times it could be heard singing in the woods of Colonus on the outskirts of Athens, as Sophocles[2] bears witness. 'White Colonus, which the sweet lady nightingale oft-times frequents, warbling beneath the green glades.' In this passage Sophocles is concerned with local colour, but from Homer[3] onwards it became a commonplace for poets to associate the nightingale with the tragedy of Philomela and to describe its song as a dirge. So Penelope pines for her husband Odysseus 'even as when the olive nightingale sings sweetly at the spring's beginning, sitting among the trees' soft foliage, and with many a trill pours out her varied notes lamenting the loss of her child.'

The nightingale sings by day,[4] as well as by night, and this appears to be the point of the lyric poet Ibycus'[5] remark that 'the sleepless glorious dawn awakens the nightingales'. It has, however, been argued that 'nightingales' is a mistake for 'swallows', on the grounds that it was the bird's nightly vigil which captivated the poetic imagination and so unnoticed is the nightingale's song among the bird chorus that this view may well be right.

The poets, influenced doubtless by the myth of Tereus (see chap. XIX) were also guilty of the curious solecism that the singing nightingale belonged to the female sex. Indeed in the *Birds* the hoopoe addresses her as if she were his mate. 'Come, my love, leave now your slumbers, loose the strains of holy hymns.'[6] He also gives a remarkably accurate imitation of the nightingale's song in the course of his serenade. 'Tio, tio, tio, tio, tio, tio, tio, tio', followed by 'trioto, trioto, totobrix'[7] – 'that marvellous crescendo on a single note', to quote Warde Fowler.[8] However the myth that the singing nightingale belonged to the female sex was not confined to the poets. Aristotle[9] thought that both the cock and hen nightingale sang, though 'the hen stops singing when brooding and producing young.' He also believed that the hen taught the young to sing. 'A nightingale has been observed instructing her

chicks to sing, which suggests that song and voice are not of the same nature, but that the former is capable of improvement.'[10] Dionysius[11] goes further. 'Nightingales nourish their offspring with song rather than sustenance and kill those which lack voices.'

The nightingale sings for only a short period in the spring and is rarely heard after the young are hatched in June. Aristotle's[12] estimate of a fortnight is probably not far from the mark. 'The nightingale sings for fifteen days and nights on end, when the mountains are growing dense with verdure. After this period it still sings, but no longer continuously. As summer proceeds it sings another song no longer varied, clear and modulated but simple.'

What follows apparently refers to the moult. 'It changes its plumage and in Italy goes under another name at this season.' The nightingale, with its inconspicuous plumage, could, of course, have been confused with other warblers, but why specifically in Italy is obscure. Aelian[13] also refers to its change of colour and song.

Finally it was believed, like other migrants, 'to go into hiding [from autumn until spring] and so to be visible for only a limited period.'[14]

Aristotle's[15] account of its nesting is perfectly accurate. 'The nightingale nests at the beginning of summer and lays five or six eggs.' Even the antics of young nightingales did not escape observation, 'making trial of their fledgling wings on a tree by flitting from twig to twig.'[16]

For the myth of Tereus and Philomela see chap. XIX; for other fables see chap. XXI; for its capture and caging see chaps XI and XIV; for the nightingale and Sirens see chap. XXII.

CUCKOO (KOKKYX)

The cuckoo (*cuculus canorus*) arrives in Greece in March and is heard in April.[17] In ancient times its familiar cry was welcomed as a sign of spring and as marking the end of the long, cold days of winter. 'When the cuckoo sings cuckoo among the oak leaves he first brings joy to mortals over the boundless earth', quoth Hesiod,[18] the author of the *Works and Days*.

According to Aristophanes[19] 'Cuckoo!' was also the signal to start work on the land. 'The cuckoo, on the other hand, was king of Egypt and all Phoenicia [see chap. XX] and whenever the cuckoo cried "Cuckoo!" all the Phoenicians would reap their wheat and barley in the plains', a piece of information which Euelpides immediately caps with 'So that's the real reason why we cry "Cuckoo!". Pull your fingers out, you sods. It's time to be off to the fields!'

Curiously enough, having regard to the bird's habits, there are no references in Greek literature, unlike Latin, to cuckoldry.

The superficial resemblance of the cuckoo to a hawk was familiar to every countryman and gave rise to the myth that it was a hawk in disguise. 'Some say that the cuckoo is a transformed hawk, because at the time of its arrival the hawk which it resembles is not seen. In fact it is only for a few days that other hawks are seen when the cuckoo begins to call. But the hawk possesses talons, whereas the cuckoo has none. Again in regard to its head it bears no resemblance to the hawk, but in both respects rather resembles a pigeon. Only in colour does it resemble the hawk, except that the hawk is striped, while the cuckoo is spotted. In size and flight it most clearly resembles the smallest kind of hawk, which is absent for the most part during the period when the cuckoo appears, though both have been seen together. Also the cuckoo has been seen being eaten by a hawk. Yet no birds of the same species are cannibalistic.'

The above account is a model of caution. Aristotle[20] carefully weighs up the evidence of the resemblances and differences between presumably the female sparrow hawk or the male hobby and the cuckoo, but declines to commit himself.

Aristotle's[21] account of the cuckoo's breeding habits are only partly accurate, which is scarcely surprising since the true facts have only recently come to light. He begins with a curious self-evident disclaimer, since the cuckoo only lays a single egg in each nest. 'No-one, they say, has ever seen its nestlings. It lays but does not bother to make a nest. Sometimes, after eating their eggs, it lays in the nests of smaller birds, but lays mostly in the nests of the ring dove after eating its eggs. It occasionally lays two eggs, but normally one. It also lays in the nest of the pipit[22] and the latter hatches and rears its young. About this time it becomes fat and tasty.'[23] In a later passage Aristotle[24] amplifies these statements. 'The cuckoo, as has been remarked elsewhere, lays its egg in another bird's nest, generally in that of a ring dove or on the ground in the nest of a pipit or a lark; or in a tree in the nest of the greenfinch. It lays only a single egg and does not hatch it itself, but the bird in whose nest it lays hatches and rears it and, they say, when the young cuckoo grows it throws its own young out of the nest and lets them die. Others say that the mother kills them and gives them to the young cuckoo to eat. She despises her own young in deference to the cuckoo's magnificence.

'Most field observers agree on these details, but differ in their accounts

of the bird's destruction of its young. Some say that the cuckoo itself comes and eats the young of the foster parent, while others maintain that owing to its superior size the cuckoo chick eats up the food brought to the nest before the others can get it, with the result that they die of hunger. Others again say that being the stronger it kills the others while being reared with them. At all events the cuckoo displays intelligence in getting its offspring reared. Being conscious of its cowardice and its inability to assist it makes its offspring supposititious for their own safety. The cuckoo's cowardice surpasses that of every bird, for when it is pecked by little birds it flees in terror.'

Aelian[25] also refers to the cuckoo's nesting in much the same terms. 'The cuckoo is a very wise bird and most resourceful at devising stratagems to get it out of difficulty. At any rate it doesn't lay in the nests of every kind of bird, but in those of the lark, ring dove, greenfinch and *pappos* for it knows that these lay eggs like its own.' Had Aelian possessed any first-hand knowledge he would have known that cuckoos' eggs are small and dark, while ring doves' eggs are large and white.

The curious statement that the cuckoo prefers to lay in the nest of doves (which is also repeated in the *Marvels*)[26] is not borne out by experience though it is said to have laid in the nests of jays, kestrels, and magpies and even partridges and pheasants.[27] The great spotted cuckoo (*clamator glandarius*) which lays in the nests of crows and magpies also occurs in Greece. But there are no records of its laying in pigeons' nests.

With reference to the cuckoo's migration Aristotle[28] makes the following observations. 'The cuckoo appears for only a short time in summer and disappears during the winter.' 'The cuckoo changes its colour and is not clearly heard before its departure. It disappears at the time of the rising of the Dog star. It appears at the beginning of spring and remains until the Dog star rises.'[29] Sirius, the Dog star, rises about 3 July and few cuckoos, if any, are observed, at least in Britain, after midsummer, apart from young birds.

Theophrastus'[30] wise comment that beasts are interdependent and that the cuckoo could not exist without the pipit has already been mentioned in chap. II.

HOOPOE (EPOPS)

The hoopoe (*upupa epops*) is a common bird in Greece, with its prominent fanned crest and brilliant pink and black plumage. Aristotle[31]

describes it as a mountain-dweller and although it is true that it frequents rocky bluffs, like the Acrocorinthus,[32] it is equally at home in the plains and fields. Pausanias[33] describes it quite accurately as 'the bird into which Tereus [see chap. XIX] was transformed, somewhat larger than a quail, while the feathers on its head are attached in the form of a crest.' According to Aristophanes[34] it lived on insects and myrtle-berries, and cried 'epopoi popopopopopopoi',[35] a very passable imitation of its call. By claiming that 'it changes its appearance in summer and winter, like the majority of wild birds', Aristotle[36] was presumably referring to the autumn moult, the effect of which, however, is minimal in the hoopoe. Elsewhere it is clear from his quotation from the *Tereus* (see chap. XIX) a lost play of Sophocles, that the hoopoe was believed, like the cuckoo, to change into a hawk.

Aristotle[37] makes two references to its nest, neither of them flattering. 'Of all the birds that hatch their own eggs the hoopoe alone makes no nest, but lays in hollows in tree trunks without collecting any material.' Aristophanes[38] mentions 'sticks and straw', and it is true that there is often some litter. In the second instance he states that 'it makes its nest out of human ordure',[39] in which Aelian[40] follows him, offering a mythical explanation. 'Hoopoes are among the wildest of birds and in my view choose to nest in remote places and among high rocks through their recollection of their tragic history and hatred of the female sex. In order to discourage men from interfering with their offspring, instead of using mud, they smear their nests with a coating of human ordure.' In effect the hoopoe does nothing of the kind. The disgusting state of the nest is entirely due to the reluctance of the female to leave it and to remove its own excrement and that of its young.[41]

For the *Tereus* and other myths see chap. XIX. For the hoopoe as a weather prophet see chap. XII; as a magical bird see chap. XIV; for its piety see chap. XXI.

BEE-EATER (MEROPS)

Certainly the most brilliantly coloured bird, not only in Greece, but in the whole of Europe, is the common bee-eater (*merops apiaster*). It frequents river banks, like those of the Alpheius at Olympia.[42] Aristotle's[43] description of its plumage is brief, but accurate. 'The colour of this bird is green below, while above it is blue as with the halcyon, while the tips of the wings are red.'

Of the nest Aristotle[44] says 'The bird known as the bee-eater in Boeotia is unique among birds in burrowing into holes in the ground

and laying there.' Of course the kingfisher does the same, while many sea-birds are subterranean nesters, but it is a venial exaggeration. Later he amplifies the details about the nest. 'It lays at most six or seven eggs at the approach of autumn in banks with soft soil. There it excavates a hole to a depth of four feet.'[46] This is perfectly accurate apart from the curious solecism about its laying in autumn, for the hoopoe like other birds nests in spring.

In his discussion about bees Aristotle[46] states quite correctly that the bee-eater is among the insects' worst enemies and that bee-keepers destroy any nests in the vicinity of the hives. The bee-eater's habit of hovering may have given rise to Aelian's[47] fanciful statement that the bird can fly backwards.

Aristotle[48] refers to the fable of the bee-eaters' filial piety. 'Some say that the bee-eaters do the same [as the storks] and that they are maintained in turn by their young not only while growing old but as soon as the young are ready to do so and that the parent birds remain in the nest.'

For the hoopoe in magic and medicine see chap. XIV; for metamorphosis into a hoopoe see chap. XIX.

WOODPECKER (DRYOKOLAPTES (DRYOPS), KELEOS, PIPO)

Seven species of woodpecker are found in Greece, viz the great black woodpecker (*dryocopus martius*), the green woodpecker (*picus viridis*), and the Syrian (*dendrocopus syriacus*), white-backed (*dendrocopus leucotos*), greater spotted (*dendrocopus major*), middle spotted (*dendrocopus medius*) and lesser spotted (*dendrocopus minor*) woodpeckers. The spotted woodpeckers are superficially alike, although the last is by far the smallest.

Aristotle's[49] account is confusing because he mentions the birds under three separate names, some of which overlap. His description of *dryokolaptes* is an excellent general description of woodpeckers as a class, but he only mentions three species. 'The woodpecker taps trees for grubs and insects in order to make them appear. When they emerge it gathers them up with its tongue which is broad and long. It runs swiftly about the trees in every pose, even upside down like the gekko. Its claws are naturally better adapted than those of daws for maintaining a firm grip on trees. For it proceeds by sticking them in. One species of woodpecker is smaller than a blackbird and has small red spots, while the other is larger. A third species is not much smaller than a hen. It nests in trees both in general and in olives. It feeds on ants and grubs found in trees. In its eager search for grubs they say it makes

such hollows that the trees collapse. A tame specimen inserted an almond in a cleft in a piece of wood to keep it firm while it pecked at it. With the third blow it split and ate the soft kernel.'

The bird with red spots smaller than a blackbird must be one of the spotted woodpeckers, but hardly the lesser, which is only the size of a sparrow. Again the hen-sized woodpecker can only be the great black species. The green woodpecker is the only one, apart from the black, that is larger than a blackbird so the reference is presumably to this. However Aristotle[50] treats the latter separately under *keleos*. The green woodpecker, though common in Italy, is said to be rare in Greece and in ancient times was associated with the Peloponnese. 'It is about as large as a dove, and is wholly green in colour. It is a redoubtable woodman. Its habitat is for the most part among trees and it makes a loud cry. It is particularly common in the Peloponnese.' This is an excellent description of the green woodpecker or 'Yaffle' with its ringing laugh. But, as so often in the *History of Animals*, absurdities are appended. 'The blue rock thrush (?) and the green woodpecker are friends, for the green woodpecker lives on the banks of streams and in brakes!'[51] Doubtless green woodpeckers are found among the surroundings suggested, but not the blue rock thrush, if that is the meaning of *laedos*.

For the myth of Keleos see chap. XIX.

Under *pipo* Aristotle[52] mentions two species, apparently of woodpeckers, which from his description would appear to be the greater and lesser spotted varieties, or if not the greater then one of the other species of comparable size. 'There are other birds that feed on grubs, which exist for the most part by hunting grubs, like the greater and lesser *pipo*. Some call them both woodpeckers. Their appearance is similar, as is their cry, though the greater's is the louder. Both of these gain their livelihood by flying on to trees.' Further on we are told that the *pipo* has 'short legs' like the wall creeper.[53] Later authorities confused the *pipo* with other species.[54]

For the *pipo* in myth see chap. XIX.

WRYNECK (IYNX)

The wryneck (*iynx torquilla*) is a summer visitor to the south-eastern counties of England, to most of northern and central Europe, Italy and the Balkans, but not apparently Greece. Probably it was found in Greece in ancient times though its absence from Aristophanes' list may be significant. Aristotle,[55] at any rate, left an excellent description. 'Some birds, but not many, have two toes in front and two behind, for

example the so-called wryneck. This bird is somewhat larger than a chaffinch, has mottled plumage, a peculiar arrangement of the toes and a tongue like a snake's. In fact it can protrude it for a length of four fingers and retract it again. In addition it can turn its neck backwards without moving the rest of its body, as snakes do. Its claws are long and resemble those of the green woodpecker. It makes a shrill cry.'

Aelian likened the bird's cry to a flute, while Dionysius[56] says they plunge their tongues into ants' nests. The ants take the tongue for food and so are trapped. He also likens the weaving of the neck to that of effeminate men celebrating the rites of Rhea.[57]

For the wryneck's extensive magical associations see chap. XIV.

LARK (KORYDALOS, KORYDOS)

Several species of lark are found in Greece including the crestless calandra (*melanocorypha calandra*) and short-toed (*calandrella rufescens*) larks, the crested lark (*galerida cristata*) and both the woodlark (*lullula arborea*) and the sky lark (*alauda arvensis*).

Aristotle[58] distinguished only two species. 'There are two species of larks. The one lives on the ground and has a crest. The other is gregarious and not scattered in ones and twos, but its plumage resembles the other, though it is smaller and lacks a crest. It is edible.'

The first species described is presumably the crested lark, which is the commonest lark in Greece, and the second the short-toed lark. The former he describes as the size of a greenfinch,[59] though in fact it is somewhat larger. It is certainly a ground-dweller[60] and never sits in trees,[61] but revels in dust baths.[62] It is also a ground-nester[63] and a favourite host of the cuckoo.[64] It was also reputed to be faithful.[65]

Theocritus[66] refers to its singing along with linnets in a famous description of shepherds in summer. But others curiously decried its song *viz-à-viz* e.g. the swan's.[67]

Aristotle[68] records a number of fanciful enmities between the crested lark and other birds, the most absurd of which is the heron, whose eggs it was reputed to peck.

The calandra lark is mentioned by Dionysius[69] in connection with the water trap (see chap. XI).

For the bird's use of mule grass as an amulet see chap. XIV; for its place in folklore see chap. XXI.

PIPIT (TETRIX, HYPOLAIS)

The tawny pipit (*anthus campestris*), Richard's pipit (*a. richardi*), ob-

served in Macedonia in 1965, and tree pipit (*a. trivialis*) are found in Greece, but were not apparently distinguished in ancient times from the larks. Aristotle[70] says 'The *tetrix*, which Athenians call *ourax* [tail-wagger?] neither nests on the ground or in trees, but in bushes near the ground.' Pipits, of course, are ground-nesters and earlier he classes it with the partridge, quail and lark as such.[71] The reference to the *hypolais* is vaguer still. It nests on the ground and plays host to the cuckoo.[72]

GOLDEN ORIOLE (CHLORION)

One of the most striking birds on migration in Greece and one of the most beautiful birds in the world is the golden oriole (*oriolus oriolus*). Nevertheless, and perhaps because it was a bird of passage, it is ignored in literature.

Aristotle's[73] account is succinct, but not wholly accurate. 'The oriole is entirely yellow. It is not seen in winter, but is most in evidence during the period of the summer solstice and disappears when Arcturus rises. It is dove-sized.' In fact the cock oriole has black wings and tail, while the hen is dull green. Also it is smaller than the turtle dove, being about the size of a song thrush.

Elsewhere he describes it curiously as 'quick to learn, clever at getting a living, a poor flyer while its plumage is wretched.'[74] This is an extraordinary lapse, worthy only of the worst of the compilers of the treatise. Whether the oriole was ever caged we do not know, but it is certainly not a poor flyer. The golden flash of a migrant streaking down the Pleistus gorge at Delphi was an unforgettable sight.[75] The plumage, of course, is all but unrivalled.

Aelian's[76] account is confused. He mentions the greenfinch (*chloris*) and states that the male bird is known as the oriole (*chlorion*). He also describes the nest which appears to be that of the greenfinch. The elaborate nest of the oriole, slung between the branches of a tree, would be naturally unfamiliar to the Greeks. Other details derive from Aristotle. Pliny[77] described the nest, but attributed it to a woodpecker!

Somehow the oriole became associated with the phoenix myth (see chap. x).

'The krex [corncrake?] is at war with the oriole (concerning which, by the way, they say that it was born from a funeral pyre).'[78]

NIGHTJAR (AIGOTHELAS)

The nightjar (*caprimulgus europaeus*) is found throughout the whole of

Europe and apparently acquired the erroneous reputation of sucking goats' teats from its silent nocturnal flight, sometimes among the herds.

Aristotle's[79] description is as follows: 'The so-called goat-sucker is a mountain bird. It is somewhat larger than a blackbird and smaller than a cuckoo. It lays two or three eggs and is sluggish in disposition. It flies up to nannies and sucks their milk, from which habit it gets its name. It is said that after it has sucked the milk the teat shrivels up and the beast goes blind. It has poor sight by day but is sharp-sighted at night.' 'Mountain' in Aristotle is often ambiguous, but the nightjar certainly frequents hillsides and moors. The clutch of eggs, on the other hand, is invariably two. Aelian[80] repeats the myth about its goat-sucking proclivities, while the *Geoponica*[81] (a Byzantine compilation on agriculture) states that it attacks bees. It certainly feeds on beetles and moths.

ROCK NUTHATCH (SITTE)

One of the most familiar birds in spring about the ruins of Mycenae is the noisy rock nuthatch (*sitta neumayer*) which closely resembles the common nuthatch (*sitta europaea*), except in its choice of habitat. The latter is also found in Greece, but the former is confined to that country. Krüper's nuthatch (*skrueperi*) is resident in the islands off Anatolia.

Aristotle[82] describes the nuthatch as 'warlike in disposition, of quick intelligence, neat in habit and manages well. It is regarded as a witch on account of its wisdom. It has many offspring and looks after them and lives by pecking trees.'

Much of this is clearly fanciful, like the myth, also recorded by Aristotle,[83] that it pecked eagles' eggs! But the rock nuthatch is certainly a lively bird and lays eight or more eggs. Like the woodpecker it lives by searching for insects and nuts on trees.

For the nuthatch as an omen see chap. XIII.

TREE CREEPER (KNIPOLOGOS) SHORT-TOED CREEPER (KERTHIOS)

The tree creeper (*certhia familiaris*) is only a local breeder in the north of Greece. Nevertheless Aristotle's[84] description seems to refer to it. 'In size as small as a linnet, but with dusky and speckled plumage. It has a weak call and it too [he has been describing the woodpeckers] taps trees.'

The description of the *kerthios* is vaguer and probably does not refer to the same bird, but rather, as Professor Geoffrey Arnott suggests, to the short-toed creeper (*certhia brachydactyla*) which is resident.

'A tiny bird, bold in character which lives among the trees, eats wood-worms, finds an easy living and has a clear call.'[85]

WALL CREEPER (KYANOS)

One of the most strikingly beautiful birds, occasionally to be seen in the Alpine ravines of central Europe, is the blue-black wall creeper with its crimson wings. Aristotle's[86] detailed description of the *kyanos* (blue bird) fits it, apart from the wings. 'There is a rock bird called the blue bird which is pretty common on Nisyros [one of the Sporades] and spends its life on rocks. In size it is smaller than a blackbird, but rather bigger than a chaffinch. It has long claws and climbs up the rocks. It is entirely blue and has a long thin beak, but its legs are short like a woodpecker's.'

Aelian[87] describes it as 'a bird which avoids man, hating city life and domestic dwellings – taking pleasure neither in inland areas or fertile islands. It prefers Scyros and any similar grim, infertile and uninhabited spot, at least for the most part.' Whether Nisyros or Scyros it is odd to find the wall creeper associated with barren islands, unless such is its preferred habitat during its winter wanderings.

BLUE ROCK THRUSH (LAIOS)

Though described as 'solitary' the blue rock thrush (*monticola solitarius*) by no means avoids inhabited places and may be observed singing among the ruins of the forum in Rome. Aristotle's[88] brief description is accurate as far as it goes. 'The blue rock thrush resembles the blackbird, but in size it is somewhat smaller. It lives on rocks or on tiled roofs. It lacks the blackbird's orange bill.'

The rock thrush (*monticola saxatilis*) is rarer and found at higher altitudes in central and northern Greece, e.g. above Delphi.[89]

For a fabled transformation see chap. XIX.

LINNET (ANTHOS, AKANTHIS, AKANTHYLIS)

Aristotle[90] describes the linnet (*carduelis cannabina*) in association with the canary-like serin (*thraupis*), which is only a winter visitor to Greece, and the goldfinch. But neither the identification of *akanthis* with the linnet or of *thraupis* with the serin is certain. 'These birds live on thistles and never eat grubs or anything living. They live among their food.' Elsewhere Aristotle[91] describes it as 'the size of a tree creeper,' while it was defined by the lexicographer Hesychius[92] as 'a kind of sparrow'.

There was clearly some confusion for Aristotle[93] also describes the linnet as 'poorly coloured', which is certainly untrue of the brightly coloured cock bird and as 'living a hard life [presumably among the thistles] though possessing a clear voice.' One ancient commentator apparently identified it with the goldfinch (*poikilis*) on account of its colourful plumage.[94]

The song of the linnet is better described by a poet in the *Anthology* as 'buzzing sweetly'.[96] Theocritus[96] coupled it with the lark's while Phile[97] called it 'the all beauteous linnet, for it sings a sweet and clear-voiced song.'

Most authorities identify the *akanthis* with the siskin (*carduelis spinus*) which is only a winter wanderer, like the serin (*serinus canarius*), to Greece. But both the siskin and serin prefer conifers or larches to thistles. The siskin's song is rarely heard, and although the serin is as good a singer as a canary neither bird is found in summer except in the extreme north.

Aelian[98] states that the linnet was sacred, appropriately enough, to the 'gods of the wayside' (see chap. XVI).

For a mythical transformation see chap. XIX.

GREENFINCH (CHLORIS)

Aristotle[99] describes the greenfinch (*chloris chloris*) as a 'grub-eater'. 'It has a yellow belly and is the size of a lark. It lays four or five eggs and makes its nest of comfrey, dragging it up by the roots, and lines it beneath with hair and wool.'[100] The nest is placed in a tree and visited by the cuckoo. All this is quite accurate. Aelian's[101] account is based upon it, but he confuses the greenfinch, as has been mentioned, with the golden oriole.

GOLDFINCH (ASTER, ASTRAGALINOS, CHRYSOMETRIS, POIKILIS)

The goldfinch (*carduelis carduelis balcanica*) is a common bird in Greece, but rarely mentioned by the Ancients. It was known in late antiquity as *astragalinos* and the faded colours of a dead pet bird were described by Constantine Manasses[102] (AD 1150).

Aristotle[103] apparently knew it as the *chrysometris*, and associated it with the serin (?) and linnet (?). Dionysius[104] alone described it correctly under the Greek name *aster* (star). 'Goldfinches have a red spot, shaped like a star, on their heads.' For the *poikilis*, which Aristotle[105] describes as hostile to various other birds, see above under *Linnet*.

For its capture see chap. XI.

HAWFINCH (KOKKOTHRAUSTES – KERNEL BREAKER)

The shy and beautiful hawfinch (*coccothraustes coccothraustes*) is resident in Greece (it was seen in Attica in April) but commoner in winter. Hesychius dismisses it as 'a kind of bird'.

BLACKCAP (SYKALIS – FIG-BIRD)

In addition to the blackcap (*sylvia atricapilla*) itself, which visits Greece in autumn, several other black-headed warblers are resident in the country as well as the black-headed bunting (*emberiza melanocephala*). They include the Orphean (*sylvia hortensis*) Sardinian (*sylvia melanocephala*) and Rüppell's (*sylvia rüppelli*) warblers, all of which bear a superficial resemblance to the blackcap as well as to the black-headed tits.

Aristotle[106] classifies the 'fig-bird' as a 'grub-eater', though the blackcap is partial to insects of all kinds as well as fruit. Later he states that the 'black-heads' (tits) and 'fig-birds' change into one another, but that the former appear in the autumn and the latter when it ends.[107] Alexander of Myndos[108] also distinguished between the 'fig-bird' and the 'black-head', which were trapped at the time of the fig harvest.

SCOPS OWL (SKOPS)

The tiny scops owl (*otus scops*) is a passage migrant in Greece, rather than a true summer resident, though it is reputed to breed. Homer[109] mentions it in the Odyssey as roosting with hawks and 'chattering sea-crows' (perhaps shearwaters) in Calypso's cave, while Theocritus[110] and others contrast its voice with that of the nightingale.

Aristotle[111] describes it as 'smaller than the little owl', but Alexander of Myndos[112] gives the most accurate description. 'It is smaller than the little owl and has whitish spots on its lead-coloured plumage, while two feathers sprout from its eyebrows, on either side of the temple.'

In another passage, which discusses the scops owl as a table bird, Aristotle[113] appears to distinguish it from the resident little owl, which he describes as another race of scops. 'Of the scops owls some are seen at all seasons and are termed "resident owls", but are not eaten because they are inedible. The others appear at some point during the autumn, for one or two days at the most. They are both edible and highly regarded. They differ from the so-called "resident owls" in nothing except that they are fatter. They are silent, whereas the others are not.

With regard to their origin there is no first-hand evidence, except that they appear when the west wind blows.'

It is true that the little owl is resident, while the scops is migratory. But the latter is by no means silent, maintaining a monotonous hoot throughout the night.

For the dance of the scops owl see chap. XXI; for the owl as food see chap. XI.

LONG-EARED OWL (NYKTIKORAX-NIGHT-RAVEN)

The long-eared owl (*asio otus*) is resident throughout Europe, including Greece, though it is mainly a winter visitor. Aristotle says[114] 'The eared owl resembles the ordinary owl [by which he presumably refers to the little owl], except that it has feathers round its ears. Some call it the "night raven".' Earlier he classes it with the little owl and eagle owl as one of the night birds which possess talons.[115] As for its hunting habits 'The owl and the night raven and all the birds that have poor sight by day hunt for their food during the night; but not all through the night; only during the evenings and at dawn. Their food consists of mice, lizards, cock-chafers and similar small creatures.'[116]

For the owl as a mimic see chap. XI; as a bird of omen chap. XIII; in a mythical transformation see chap. XIX.

JAY (KISSA)

The jay is resident throughout Europe and was well known to the ancient Greeks. Aristotle[117] states that 'the jay (*garrulus glandiarius*) has a variety of notes (in fact one for each day). It lays five eggs and makes its nest in trees out of hair and wool.' Again 'when acorns are getting scarce it lays up a secret store.' It was 'the same size as a mistle thrush',[118] while its greed and garrulity were proverbial. 'Neither jay, nightingale nor dove is more talkative' a comic poet protests.[119] Theocritus[120] contrasts its raucous screech with the song of the nightingale. But it was also a good mimic and the physician Soranus supported Aristotle's[121] view in stating that its voice was as variegated as its plumage.

The magpie (*pica pica*) is resident in Greece, where it is known as the *karakaxa*. So is the brilliantly hued roller (*coracias garrulus*). Neither bird is specifically described by the Ancients, unless the magpie is the species of daw 'known as the *lykos* [wolf]' mentioned by Aristotle.[122]

For methods of trapping the jay see chap. XI.

CHOUGH (KORAKIAS)

The chough (*pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*), with its red legs and bill, in-

habits the higher inland ranges of Greece and Crete, where it nests in caves and crannies. Colonies have been observed in Arcadia and on Mount Ida.[123] It appears to be less of a sea-cliff haunting species than in Britain. Aristotle[124] describes it as 'a species of daw, the size of a crow, but with a red beak'. The yellow-billed Alpine chough (*pyrrhocorax gracula*) is described by Pliny[125] and is said to be resident in the Peloponnese and Crete (*CFG*, II, 107).

BLUETHROAT (OROSPIZOS)

The beautiful robin-like bluethroat (*cyanosylvia svecica*) is said to be rare in Greece, yet Aristotle's[126] description could hardly refer to any other species. 'It resembles the sparrow and is of similar size, but has a blue throat and lives among the mountains.'

PIGEONS (PERISTERA, PELEIA, PELEIAS, PHASSA, PHAPS, OINAS, TRYGON)

There is considerable confusion in the accounts of the ancient authorities. *Peristera* and *peleia* were names for pigeons in general. *Peristera* appears to have been usually reserved for the domestic species (*columba livia*) whereas *peleia* was applied both to the rock (*columbia livia*) and stock dove (*columbia oenas*), which latter is confined nowadays to the north of Greece.

The rock dove appears also to have been known as *oinas* (wine-coloured) though Aristotle[127] describes it as 'somewhat larger than the domestic bird', whereas he had described the *peleia* as smaller. The identity of the *peristera* i.e. the domestic pigeon, is equally obscure since European domestic breeds are believed to be descended from the rock dove, which Aristotle describes as 'less easily domesticated' than the *peristera* with which it interbreeds!

Aristotle[128] attempts to distinguish the various species as follows. 'Of pigeons there are several species, for the domestic bird differs from the rock dove. In fact the latter is the smaller bird and is less easily domesticated. It is also black, small, with red and scaly feet, so no one keeps it. The largest of the pigeon species is the ring dove and the next in size is the stock dove. The latter is somewhat larger than the domestic pigeon. Smallest of all is the turtle dove.'

ROCK DOVE (PELEIA, OINAS)

On the rocky coasts of Greece, as on those of the north of Scotland and Ireland the rock dove far outnumbers the ring dove or wood pigeon. It was familiar to Homer[129] who refers to 'the rock dove, which pursued by a hawk flies to a hollow rock or cleft.' He also likens Hera and

Athena strutting along to 'shy doves'.[130] Nestor's cup again was decorated with doves of gold.[131]

Aristotle[132] describes the rock dove incorrectly as smaller than the domestic pigeon when it is, if anything, somewhat larger, though he is correct in his statement that the stock dove is smaller than the ring dove.[133]

Rock doves, appropriately enough, were said to have fed the infant Zeus in the Cretan cave and also to have supplied the god with ambrosia (see chaps XVI, XVIII and XXI).

WOOD PIGEON OR RING DOVE (PHASSA, PHAPS)

The wood pigeon, though mainly a winter visitor to Greece, was familiar from the earliest times, being represented on a Minoan tablet.[134] The epithet 'wood pigeon slayer' is applied to falcons in Homer.[135] Aristotle[136] describes the bird with perfect accuracy as 'the largest of the pigeon family' and as 'of cock size and grey in colour'.[137]

Alexander of Myndos[138] adds the more detailed information that it has 'a bluish head verging on purple [Tennyson's 'livelier iris'] and white eyes with black pupils'. Aristotle[139] also notes that it is difficult to distinguish between the sexes, and that the birds gather in flocks during the season of migration.[140] Some birds, he believed, hibernated, while others left with the swallows.[141] During the winter the wood pigeon was silent, except during spells of fine weather following a very stormy period. It normally began to coo on the return of spring.[142] All this is generally true, but in order to account for their very large numbers he says that 'some maintain' that the bird bred when only three months old! The period between mating and fledging was said to be forty-two days. Two eggs were laid in the spring[143] and the squabs were born blind.[144] Both birds brooded and remained faithful beyond death, since widowed birds never remated.

For its capture see chap. XI; erotic and magical associations chap. XIV.

STOCK DOVE (PELEIA OINAS)

Since the stock dove is apparently only resident in the extreme north of Greece the supposed doves which inhabited the oak at Dodona in Epirus were presumably either stock doves or wood pigeons. Nevertheless Herodotus says that they arrived from Egypt and were black![145] (see chap. XVI).

TURTLE DOVE (TRYGON)

The turtle dove (*streptopelia turtur*) is found throughout Europe and is

well known in Greece. It is a migratory species arriving in spring. Large numbers were encountered in the Ionian Sea in May. Aristotle[146] describes the turtle dove as 'about the size of a green woodpecker' and as 'the smallest of the pigeon family'.[147] He is less accurate about its colour which he states as 'ashy',[148] when, in fact, it is rufous. But it is true that it feeds both on fruit and grass.[149]

He contradicts himself when describing its migratory habits, stating first that it hibernates and moults during the winter[150] and later that it never winters in Greece. At the season of migration it flocks with the ring doves.[151]

He adds the curious detail, also referred to by Alexander of Myndos,[152] that the turtle dove never tilts its head when drinking, unless it has quenched its thirst.[153] The characteristic purr of the turtle dove was described by Theocritus[154] as 'moaning' and employed proverbially of a chatter-box.

Aristotle[155] states that it lays two eggs and describes its nesting habits in association with the ring dove. 'All members of the pigeon family, like the ring dove and turtle dove, lay two eggs at a time. At any rate that is the general rule, and the clutch never exceeds three. The domestic pigeon lays, as has been stated, all the year round, but the turtle dove and ring dove only in the spring, and never rear more than two broods. They produce a second brood if the first eggs are destroyed, for many birds destroy their own eggs . . . Some say that ring doves and turtle doves mate and produce young when only three months old, in proof of which they instance their vast numbers.'[156] Aristotle's observations appear to be based on the habits of the domestic pigeon rather than knowledge of wild birds.

Like the ring dove the turtle dove was said to be faithful to its mate and both sexes (hard to differentiate) shared in incubation.[157] When employed as decoys they were said to live for eight years.[158]

For the turtle dove as a sacred bird see chap. XVI; in medicine see chap. XIV; as decoy see chap. XI.

SHRIKES (MALAKOKRANEUS – SOFT HEAD)

Four kinds of shrike are resident in Greece, the lesser grey shrike (*lanius minor*), the woodchat shrike (*lanius senator*) the red-backed shrike (*lanius collurio*) and the masked shrike (*lanius nubicus*), while the great grey shrike (*lanius excubitor*) is a winter visitor.

Aristotle[159] describes the lesser grey shrike, which is said to be the commonest species in Greece. 'The so-called "soft head" always

perches in the same spot and is captured there. As for its appearance it has a big cartilaginous head and is somewhat smaller than a thrush. Its beak is powerful, short and round. Its colour is ashy all over. It is quick on its feet but a sluggish flyer. It is captured mostly with an owl as decoy.'

Aristotle[160] says much the same of the *pardalos*: 'It generally appears in flocks and not singly. Its plumage is entirely ashen and it is roughly the same size as the birds already mentioned [*viz* the lesser grey shrike, the oriole and the turtle dove]. It is a swift runner and a strong flyer with a loud, but not a deep note.'

Certain details suit the great grey shrike (*lanius excubitor*) which migrates to Greece in winter from its breeding haunts in northern Europe, or its Mediterranean form (*lanius excubitor meridionalis*) which occurs in Spain and southern France, e.g. the colour and size are right. But the bird does appear singly, is not a swift runner and has a deep, harsh note. On the other hand it tends to flock on migration before separating out.[161]

The description of the *kollyrion* is similarly vague. 'The *kollyrion* eats the same food as the blackbird, is the same size as the birds already mentioned [*viz* the blackbird, soft-head, pardalos and oriole] and is usually trapped during winter.'[162]

Identification with the red-backed shrike (*lanius collyrio*) is based solely on modern nomenclature.[163]

ROSE-COLOURED PASTOR OR STARLING (SELEUKIS)

The rose-coloured pastor (*sturnus roseus*) formerly migrated to Greece from its breeding haunts in south-east Europe. Dionysius[164] describes it as 'omnivorous', like the common starling, though it could prove an ally when crops were attacked by locust swarms. On such occasions it was generally welcomed, though if denied it took revenge on the harvests it had saved. In other words it was treated in much the same fashion as the Thessalians treated the jackdaw (see chap. III).

For the mythical association with Cilician Seleucia and the oracle of Apollo Sarpedonios see chap. XVI.

WHEATEAR (OINANTHE)

At least four species of wheatear visit Greece, *viz* the common wheatear (*oenanthe oenanthe*), the black-eared wheatear (*oenanthe hispanica*), the pied wheatear (*oenanthe leucomela*) and the Isabelline wheatear (*oenanthe isabellina*). The black-eared was seen in Arcadia in March and the pied on the Perachora in early April.

Aristotle's[165] description, if it refers to the wheatear, is brief and imprecise. 'The bird known as the wheatear disappears when the Dog-star is rising, and reappears when it sets. So it avoids both the extremes of cold and heat.'

PARTRIDGE (PERDIX)

The Greek partridge is the rock partridge (*alectoris graeca*). It frequents the stony slopes in hilly and mountainous districts and a pair (*chukar*) were flushed on Mount Lutraki in spring.[166] It is replaced by the chukar partridge (*alectoris chukar*) on the Aegean islands, while the common partridge (*perdix cinerea*) still occurs in the north.

The proverbial salacity of the partridge intrigued the Ancients far more than any other feature and Aristotle[167] describes its misdemeanours in detail. 'The partridge is both a malicious and mischievous bird. During spring, after much noisy squabbling, they pair off from the flock, each cock with a hen. They are then so salacious that to prevent the hens sitting the cocks, if they find the eggs, roll them out and break them. The hen employs the ruse of running away to lay, but is often taken short and obliged to deposit her eggs wherever chance dictates. If the cock is nearby, in order to preserve them unharmed, she avoids going near them. If she is seen by a man she acts in the same way as she does with her chicks enticing him away by remaining close to his feet until she has taken him to a safe distance.

'When the hens retire to lay the cocks assemble to call and fight and are then known as "widowers". The vanquished cock follows the victor and is trodden by him alone. If one is vanquished by a second or another it is trodden unknown to the original victor. This does not happen at every season, but only during a certain period of the year. The same thing happens in the case of quails and sometimes with domestic cocks. For when they are dedicated in temples without hens they all tread any newcomer. Similarly tame partridges tread wild birds, strike their heads and maltreat them.'

Even taller stories were told. The hens were said to become pregnant after merely scenting the males and to lay on the spot,[168] while according to Oppian[169] partridges sometimes mated with gazelles!

Elsewhere Aristotle[170] informs us that the partridge lived for fifteen years (in captivity) and the hens even longer. Being heavy birds, which could only fly short distances, they did not make a proper nest, merely 'scraping a hole on a flat piece of ground (for they do not make their nests anywhere else) and concealing it with thorns and sticks to escape

the vigilance of hawks and eagles.' They laid up to sixteen eggs.[171] The nest itself consisted of two compartments, the hen brooding on one side and the cock on the other,[172] a statement at variance with his later contention that the cocks broke the eggs.[173]

Like the quail the partridge sheltered its brood under its wings and was also said to change its nesting site,[174] although this was manifestly difficult once the eggs had been laid, if not downright impossible.

The partridge's call was said to differ according to the locality. 'The partridges at Athens found on this side of Korydallos [a local village]' says Theophrastus,[175] 'in the direction of the city call "kakkabe", while those on the other side called "tittybe".'

Aristotle[176] also says that 'some cackle, while others croon'. This suggests that the Greeks differentiated between the notes of the common and rock partridge. Aelian[177] refers to the 'syrian partridge', which is not found in Greece.

For the partridge as food and sport see chap. XI; as pets see chap. XV; in augury see chap. XIII; in myth see chap. XIX; in fable see chap. XXI.

FRANCOLIN (ATTAGAS)

The francolin (*tetro francolinus*) or black partridge, is now apparently extinct in southern Europe, and no longer nests on the west coast of Turkey. Its preferred habitat was marshy country.[178] The best description is that of Alexander of Myndos. 'The francolin is rather larger than a partridge, with its back covered with stripes [according to Aristophanes like that of a whipped slave] and of a clay colour verging to red. It can be caught by hunters because it is so heavy and short-winged. It delights in dust baths, is prolific and feeds on grain.'[179] Aristotle[180] too refers to its fondness for dust baths, likened its plumage to that of the woodcock and described it as 'slow to fly, keeping to the ground'.[181]

Its name – *attagas* – was onomatopoeic as both Aelian[182] and Athenaeus[183] realized. The latter dilates on the correct pronunciation of the word and describes how birds introduced from Libya to Egypt sounded, after a famine, as if they were saying 'Thrice evil to evil doers!' Francolins could not be tamed and remained silent in captivity.[184]

For the francolin as food see chap. XI.

QUAIL (ORTYX)

The Ancients had much to say about the quail (*coturnix coturnix*)

smallest of European game-birds and nowadays only an occasional visitor to Britain. It is common on the plains of Macedonia. Aristotle[185] classes the quail with the partridge as a ground-nester, with the same habits as the larger bird, including its salacious proclivities. Alexander of Myndos[186] adds the interesting information that 'the female quail has a slender neck and lacks the male's black markings under the chin'.

With reference to their migratory habits Aristotle[187] says: 'When the quails arrive, if the weather is calm or the wind is blowing from the north they pair off and make good progress. If, on the contrary, the wind is from the south they are in difficulties because it impedes their flight. In fact the wind from the south is strong and wet and that is why hunters disregard fine weather but are on the watch when south winds are blowing and the violence of the winds presents the birds flying. They do not fly well on account of their weight. Their shape in effect is bulky. That is why they call on the wing, because they find it painful. However that may be when they arrive from abroad they have no guides. On the other hand when they leave the corncrake and horned owl accompany them. The corncrake continually calls to them during the night. When they hear it the hunters know that the quails are not staying.'

This is a thoroughly sensible account, but Dionysius[188] cannot resist including absurd details. 'Quails forsake their former feeding grounds and fly in flocks across the sea. They so fear the sea that they shut their eyes and collide with ships' sails. In order to discover whether they have actually crossed the sea they carry three stones in their beaks which they drop at intervals and listen. When over the sea they fly higher. If on land they rest.' Delos was known as Ortygia – Quail Island, because migrating flocks rested there.

For their capture and sport see chap. XI; domestication see chap. XV; connection with astronomy see chap. XII and mythology see chap. XVI.

CORNCRAKE OR LANDRAIL (ORTYGOMETRA, KREX)

The migratory corncrake (*crex crex*) is now found only in the extreme north of Greece and Macedonia. According to Aristotle[189] it arrives with the quails. He describes it as 'resembling a marsh-bird',[190] and Alexander of Myndos[191] as 'the size of a turtle dove, with long legs, but of poor growth and cowardly'. It is certainly a secretive and skulking bird, whatever 'of poor growth' may signify. The comic poet Cratinus[192] associated the bird with the island of Ithaca, and Aristophanes[193] with Delos.

Whether *krex* was also the corncrake is doubtful, despite the onomatopoeic resemblance to its call. Herodotus[194] described the *krex* as ibis size and others as 'pugnacious',[195] which suggests the ruff (*machetes pugnax*). (See *Birds of Memnon*, chap. x.) The beak was described as 'saw-like',[196] and in the *Birds*[197] the crakes are said to rasp stones.

For the corncrake as a bird of ill omen see chap. XIII; as sacred to Leto see chap. XVI.

STONE CURLEW (CHARADRIOS)

The shy stone curlew (*burhinus oedicnemus*) with its stout yellow legs and huge yellow eye, is nowadays a rare visitor to the brecks and bare hillsides of eastern England. In Greece it is still said to be common and its skulking habits were familiar to the Ancients, but only the southern race (*burhinus oedicnemus saharae*) breeds (*CFG*, II, 72).

Aristotle[198] mentions it incidentally during a discussion of nesting sites classing it with the birds which 'make their homes in gullies, hollows and among boulders. It is unremarkable either for its plumage or voice. It emerges by night and skulks during the day.' In fact the stone curlew's dull plumage provides a perfect camouflage, when only its remarkable eye gives it away. When Aristophanes[199] likens the hoopoe disappearing into the copse to the stone curlew he is clearly referring to its skulking habits and not to its efforts to distract attention from the nest, since it relies entirely on camouflage.

For its proverbial medicinal powers see chap. XIV.

WOODCOCK (ASKALOPAS. SKOLOPAX)

The woodcock (*scolopax rustica*) occurs in Greece during the autumn migration and was clearly familiar to Aristotle.[200] 'It is caught with nets in plantations and is about the size of a hen with a long beak and plumage like the francolin. It runs swiftly and is fairly easily tamed.' Elsewhere he describes it as 'squatting on the ground'[201] like the lark and quail. Woodcocks do not run and it is impossible to say where the philosopher got the notion that it could be tamed.

CHAPTER V

FRESHWATER BIRDS

SWAN (KYKNOS)

Nowadays both the mute swan (*cygnus olor*) and the whooper (*cygnus musicus*) are rare visitors to southern or central Greece, though the former winters in Macedonia and Trace, and the whooper in the Balkan regions bordering on the Black Sea. Homer,[1] refers to swans in the *Iliad*. Aristotle[2] describes the swan as 'gregarious', which is on the whole true, though pairs often separate in the breeding season; as migratory,[3] which it is in the wild state, and as being among the heavier of the web-footed birds.[4] 'They live in the vicinity of lakes and marshes, experience no difficulty in finding food, are good-natured [presumably he means to their families!] fond of their offspring and long-lived. If an eagle attacks them they are prepared to defend themselves and emerge victorious, but never start a fight.'[5]

He is referring no doubt to the mute swan, as no Greek could have possessed any knowledge of the sub-arctic nesting whooper. However the Ancients do not appear to have distinguished between the two species, since Aristotle goes on to mention the fabled song. 'They are musical, and sing for the most part at the approach of death. For they fly out to sea and mariners cruising off the coast of Libya have encountered herds of them singing a mournful dirge, and seen some of them dying.'[6] (For this curious myth see chap. XVI.)

The swan's white plumage was constantly referred to and once aptly compared with the grey locks of an old man.[7] But the Greeks were less concerned with the swan as such, but almost exclusively with its fabled musical powers and place in myth.

For the swan as a songster and Apollo's sacred bird see chap. XVI; for the myth of Leda see chap. XVIII; for other myths and fable see chap. XXI; as food see chap. XI.

GOOSE (CHEN)

The bean (*anser fabalis*), the grey-lag (*anser anser*), the white-fronted (*anser albifrons*) and the lesser white-fronted (*anser erythropus*) goose are all winter visitors to Greece. Homer[8] was familiar with the flocks in Anatolia, and compares the warrior hosts leaving the ships and huts to

geese, cranes or swans flighting round the river Cayster, or as fleeing before an eagle[9] or a vulture.[10]

Most of Aristotle's[11] observations naturally refer to the tame bird (see chap. IX) but he mentions a 'small gregarious' wild species which could be either of the white-fronted races. He contrasts it with the 'large goose', which could be either the bean (represented with the white-fronted in ancient Egyptian art) or the grey-lag. He also describes the former as 'migratory',[12] when in fact they all are.

Aelian[13] says 'the geese crossing the Taurus mountains [in Anatolia] go in fear of the eagles, so each biting a stone to prevent its honking, as if employing a gag, fly in silence and, for the most part, succeed in giving the eagles the slip.'

For other references see chaps IX and XIV.

EGYPTIAN GOOSE OR RUDDY SHELDUCK (CHENALOPEX)

Aristotle[14] mentions the *chenalopex* in association with the heavier web-footed birds. It has been identified with the Egyptian goose (*chenalopex aegyptiacus*) which does not occur in Greece, but it is possible that the accounts refer to the resident ruddy shelduck (*casarca ferruginea*), which nests sparingly in the extreme north (*CFG*, II, 36). The common shelduck (*tadorna tadorna*) also breeds in Thrace and Macedonia.

Aelian[15] describes it as 'goose like in appearance, but in its cunning behaviour it might be most rightly compared with the fox. It is smaller than a goose, but more courageous and a regular battler. It is a match for the eagle and pole-cat and any other foe.'

Aelian's[16] comparison with the fox could refer to the shelduck's habit of nesting in burrows. He also states that it is 'a creature which loves its offspring and behaves like the partridge. For it lies down in front of its offspring and gives hope to the hunter of catching it. Meantime the duckling run away. When they are out of danger the duck flies up and escapes.' Horapollo[17] goes further. According to him the parent birds sacrifice their own lives in order that their young may escape.

Its eggs were prized second to those of the peacock.[18]

DUCKS (NETTAI – SWIMMERS)

The Ancients, for some curious reason, all but ignored the ducks. Aristotle[19] classed them with other web-footed birds, including the *boskas* (teal?) 'like the duck, only smaller', whose habitat was rivers and meres. Apart from physiological references to the size of the oeso-

phagus this is all that Aristotle[20] says. In fact most European ducks visit Greece in winter.

Alexander of Myndos[21] makes the pertinent observation that the 'drake is larger and more brilliantly coloured'. He also says that the plumage of the drake teal is 'variegated'.

In the *Birds*[22] ducks act as 'brick-layers', nature having provided them with webbed-feet for shovels. They wear 'aprons' too, which may refer to the white ring round the mallard's neck, or at any rate to some detail of plumage.

For the duck as food see chap. XI; in myth see chaps XVI and XIX.

WIGEON (PENELOPS)

The identity of the *penelops* remains a mystery. It is described as 'variegated' by the poet Ibycus,[23] while Alcaeus[24] refers to 'sea-birds arrived from the ends of the earth with variegated backs'. All of which suggests the *wigeon* (*anas penelope*). However, the wigeon only migrates as far as the extreme north-east of Greece. The *penelops* was said to be 'pigeon-size' by one authority,[25] but as larger than the mallard, while the wigeon is in fact smaller. Hesychius[26] quotes the poet Ion (fifth century BC) as stating that it was 'bordered with red, for its throat is red all over'. This again suggests the wigeon.

Alexander of Myndos[27] mentions the *glaukion*, a grey-eyed duck, which could be the white-eyed pochard (*aythya nyroca*), a winter visitor to Greece.

IBIS (IBIS)

Neither the sacred (*tantalus aethiopicus*) nor the rare hermit ibis (*comatibis eremita*), known to Pliny[28] as the *phalacocorax* – literally 'bald raven', occur in Greece though the glossy ibis (*plegadis falcinellus*) wanders south from its home in the Balkans. Nevertheless the sacred ibis is of interest, owing to its mention by Herodotus and Strabo.

Aristotle[29] says 'white ibises are common throughout Egypt, apart from Pelusium. Black ibises, on the other hand, are confined to Pelusium' (i.e. to the delta at the Nile's mouth). By 'black', he presumably referred to the glossy ibis, which is a marsh bird.

Herodotus[30] describes the desert-haunting hermit ibis, as well as the sacred bird. 'The story goes that when spring comes the winged snakes come flying from Arabia towards Egypt, but are met in this gorge by the birds called ibises, which forbid their entrance and destroy them all. The Arabians assert, and the Egyptians also admit that it is in return

for this service, that the Egyptians hold the ibis in so much reverence. The appearance of the ibis is as follows. It is of a deep black colour, with legs like a crane. Its beak is slightly hooked and its size is about that of the landrail. This is a description of the black ibis which contends with the serpents.

'The others walk to and fro among men's feet, for there are two quite distinct species, and have the head and the whole of the throat bare of feathers. Its general plumage is white, but the head and neck are jet black, as also are the tips of the wings and the extremity of the tail. In its beak and legs it resembles the other species.'

Strabo[31] refers to the tameness of the sacred ibis, which 'resembles the stork in shape and size, but is of two colours, partly white like the stork, partly completely black. Every square in Alexandria is full of them. They are useful from one point of view, but not from another. They are useful in so far as they seek out every noxious creature, and prove useful scavengers in the butchers' shops.' It is perfectly true that the sacred ibis is comparatively tame, like the vulture and marabou stork, and, like them, has a preference for offal and carrion.[32]

Aelian[33] observes, quite correctly, that the ibis 'walks demurely, like a schoolgirl and you will never see it proceeding at a faster pace than a walk'. But the rest of his account is fanciful. 'They couple with their beaks and produce offspring in this fashion. The Egyptians maintain, though I am not easily convinced, that those whose concern is with embalming beasts, and are expert at the art, agree that the ibis's entrails measure 96 cubits. I have also heard that it covers a cubit in its stride. When the moon is in eclipse it shuts its eyes until the goddess shines forth again ... Now I have said that the bird lives to a great age. Apion, quoting the authority of the priests of Hieropolis, states that it is immortal. But even he considers that this is far removed from the truth and, in my view, is quite untrue. The ibis is very hot blooded, extremely voracious and a foul feeder, if in fact it lives on snakes and scorpions. Some things it digests easily, others it expels when it voids. You hardly ever see a sick ibis, yet it pokes its beak everywhere, no matter how filthy and walks on it in the hope of finding something there. But when it comes to rest it first washes and cleans itself. It nests in palm trees in order to avoid cats. For a cat cannot easily scramble and crawl up a date palm, for it is continually hindered and thrown off by projections on the trunk.'

For the ibis as a sacred bird see chap. XVI.

HERON (HRODIOS)

The heron (*ardea cinerea*) is mainly a bird of passage south of Thrace and Macedonia, while the purple heron (*ardea purpurea*) breeds in central Greece. The Ancients do not appear to have distinguished between the two.

Aristotle's[34] first account mentions three kinds of heron. 'There exist three kinds of heron; the grey i.e. the common heron; the white i.e. the little egret [*egretta garzetta*] or great white heron [*egretta alba*] and the starry,' by which he presumably referred to the bittern (*botaurus stellaris*), though the latter is now rarely recorded in Greece.

In a later passage he describes the birds in greater detail. 'Of the herons the grey, as has been already observed, experiences difficulty in mating, but is industrious, adept at carrying off its prey and a good hunter. It hunts by day. Its colour is ugly and its belly always relaxed. Of the two other kinds (for there are three in all) the white has beautiful plumage and nests and lays its eggs in trees (truer of the little egret than the great white heron). Its habitat includes marshes, lakes, plains and meadows. The bittern, on the other hand, which is nicknamed the "sluggard", according to myth is a slave transformed and, as its nickname suggests, is the most sluggish of the three.'[35]

Dionysus'[36] account is briefer, but mentions the characteristic crest. 'There are many kinds of herons. Some are small and white, others variegated and larger, others still in between, while some lack the head crest which droops from the others' heads.'

The crest is not only a prominent feature of the common heron, but also of the smaller night heron (*nycticorax nycticorax*), little and cattle (*ardeola ibis*) egrets, all of which visit Greece in winter. The cattle egret appears to have been distinguished as the *anthos* (a word also used for linnet or finch) which Aristotle[37] describes as follows –

'The horse is at emnity with the cattle egret, for it drives it from its pasture, since the bird eats its grass. It is not sharp sighted but the opposite. It imitates the horse's neigh, flies at him and endeavours to drive him away. But whenever he catches it he kills it. The cattle egret lives by rivers and marshes. It has striking plumage and experiences no difficulty in obtaining a living.'

The cattle egret is said to accompany cattle and such because the latter disturb the insects upon which it feeds, rather than for the ticks which infest them.[38]

Aelian[39] was under the delusion that oysters were the heron's

favourite diet and that it swallowed them whole, like the pelican, later vomiting up the shells!

For the heron in augury see chap. XIII; in a transformation see chap. XIX; in magic see chap. XIV and in fable see chap. XXI.

FLAMINGO (PHOINIKOPTEROS)

The greater flamingo (*phoenicopterus ruber*) is resident in southern Spain and France, but is not known to visit Greece, except on rare occasions, though it is common in the marshes of western Anatolia. There is only a single mention of this remarkable bird in ancient literature and that is in Aristophanes' *Birds*:[40]

HOOPOE: That is not one of your common or garden birds which you see every day. That's a marsh bird.

EUELPIDES: By Jove he's a fine chap, and flame coloured too!

HOOPOE: He certainly is, and, of course, his name is flamingo.

The flamingo was well known to the Romans.[41]

GALLINULE (PORPHYRION)

The purple gallinule (*porphyrio porphyrio*) is no longer common in Greece, and there have been few references to it in modern times. Nevertheless it was well known to Aristotle,[42] who describes it in considerable detail. 'It is web-footed, blue in colour, has long legs and a bill red in colour right from the head. It is the size of a cock, and has a small gullet which obliges it to take its food on its foot and dispense it in small portions. It gulps down its drink. It has five toes, with the largest in the centre.' Elsewhere he refers to its long neck and oesophagus and lack of a crop.[43]

Aelian[44] described the gallinule as the 'most beautiful and well-named of all creatures', and mentioned its delight in dust baths. Callimachus[45] distinguished it from the fabulous 'red bird' and commented on its secretive habits, particularly when feeding. Polemon[46] says it selected a special place to feed. Dionysius[47] refers to the bird's red beak and the cap-like excrescence on its head, resembling that worn by Persian archers, while Alexander of Myndos[48] associated it with Libya.

For its capture see chap. XI; for its place in fable and folklore see chap. XXI.

COOT (PHALARIS – BALD HEAD)

The coot (*fulica atra*) is a winter visitor to Greece, and was familiar to the Ancients, of whom Cyranides[49] gives the shortest, but most suc-

cinct, definition. 'Coot: a bird so-called from its white forehead. For it is entirely black apart from the white forehead. It is found on rivers and lakes.' Aristotle[50] classes the coot with other web-footed birds, but is wrong in supposing that it changed white in accordance with the seasons. Alexander of Myndos[51] gives an accurate description of the coot's shape and colour. 'The coot also has a narrow beak; it is plumper in appearance, with an ashy-grey breast and somewhat darker back.'

There is curiously no reference in the ancient authorities to the moorhen (*gallinula chloropus*), which is also found in Greece.

For the coot and Aphrodite see chap. XVI; as food see chap. XI; in medicine see chap. XIII.

LITTLE GREBE (KOLYMBIS – DIVER)

The little grebe or dabchick (*podiceps ruficollis*) and black-necked grebe (*podiceps nigricollis*) are both summer visitors to Greece. Alexander of Myndos[52] distinguishes the former as the 'little diver, smallest of water fowl, dirty black in colour, with a sharp beak and eye, and much given to diving'. Dionysius[53] also refers to its diving habits and its never coming to land 'even for rest or food'. He associates it with the *dytinos* (plunger) which could be the black-necked grebe, as well as the 'Thracian bird',[54] possibly the great crested grebe, whose range is more northerly, and whose graceful ear-flaps were thought to resemble a Thracian helmet.

For their capture see chap. XI; metamorphosis see chap. XIX.

SPUR-WINGED PLOVER (TROCHILOS – RUNNER)

The spur-winged plover (*hoplopterus spinosus*) has a wide range in Asia and Africa, and is also found in north-east Greece.

The 'runner' appears as a page in Aristophanes' *Birds*[55] and included not only the plover, but all the little waders which frequented the shore, like the dunlin (*calidris alpina*) as well as sandpipers and such. Of the spur-winged plover Herodotus[56] says that when the crocodile leaves the water and lies with its mouth open 'the plover enters its mouth and eats the leeches. This service naturally pleases the crocodile, and does the bird no harm.' Aristotle[57] says much the same. 'When the crocodile yawns the plover flies in and cleans its teeth, and so obtains its food. The crocodile appreciates the service and does not harm it, and when it wants to come out it shakes its neck so that it doesn't get bitten.'

It alone, according to Aelian,[58] of all the plover kind, is on terms of intimacy with the crocodile.

BLACK-WINGED STILT (HIMANTOPOUS – CROOK-SHANKED)

The black-winged stilt (*himantopus himantopus*) is resident in Greece north of the Peloponnese. It is ignored by Aristotle, but described by Dionysius.[59] 'The crook-shanked stilts have thin legs and are called after this characteristic. A curious feature about them is that the lower bill does not move, but only the upper.'

Pliny[60] describes it as a great fly-trapper, a habit which has been remarked on by modern ornithologists.[61]

SPOONBILL (LEUKERODIOS)

The spoonbill (*platalea leucorodia*) is only a winter visitor to Greece (it was seen feeding at the mouth of the Axios in autumn)[62] and only mentioned by Aristotle,[63] who describes it as 'smaller than the heron, with a long flat bill.'

WAGTAIL (KINKLOS, SEISOPYGIS, SCHOINILOS, PYGARGOS, SKALIDRIS)

All the above names appear to refer to small aquatic birds which could be anything from a true wagtail to a sandpiper. Both the white wagtail (*motacilla alba alba*) and the various yellow wagtails (*motacilla flava*) occur in Greece, but only the white and grey (*motacilla cinerea*) are truly aquatic. At the other end of the scale the common sandpiper (*tringa hypoleucas*) is a winter visitor, while the wood sandpiper (*tringa glareola*) has been noticed in spring.[64]

In his discussion of water birds Aristotle[65] mentions the *schoinilos*, the *kinklos* and the white-rump. The latter could be the dipper (*cinclus cinclus*) or indeed a sandpiper. 'Of these small birds,' he goes on 'the white-rump is the biggest. For it is the size of a thrush. All of these birds wag their tails. Then there is the *skalidris*, which is completely grey and spotted.'

In a later passage the reference appears to be more specifically to the true wagtails which are kept to catch flies in Malta and elsewhere. 'Certain birds live on the sea-shore, like the *kinklos*. Its character is mischievous and it is hard to catch, but when caught it takes readily to domestication. It is a cripple, since its hinder parts are weak.'[66] The latter feature, according to Aelian,[67] prevented the wagtail from making a nest, but obliged it to lay, like the cuckoo, in those of other birds. For this reason beggars were nick-named 'wagtails'.

The various definitions by the lexicographers do not help to resolve the problem of the identity of the various 'wagtails'.

CHAPTER VI

SEA-BIRDS

GULL (LAROS)

In addition to the resident Mediterranean (*larus melanocephalus*), Audouin's (*larus audouinii*) and Mediterranean herring gull (*larus argentatus michahellis*) the lesser black-backed (*larus fuscus*), common (*larus canus*), black-headed (*larus ridibundus*) slender-billed (*larus genei*) kittiwake (*rissa tridactyla*) and little gull (*larus minutus*) wander to Greece in winter.

Aristotle[1] only distinguished between the 'ashy' gull and the 'white' gull. The former was presumably the Mediterranean herring gull, the latter possibly the little gull, though no Greek gulls are pure white. Gulls nested on cliffs and laid two or three eggs,[2] which is true of most species. Dionysius,[3] on the other hand, gives a remarkably full account of the gull and its ways. 'Gulls are very attached to men and like to keep near them in a most friendly fashion. When they see fishermen hauling their nets from the sea, they flock around the boats for all the world as if they were entitled to a share in the catch, and yelp about the nets demanding their portion. The fisherman indulge them by throwing some of the fish on to the waves, and the gulls swoop on the fish and gobble them up. If any escape through the meshes they seize on them greedily. Hence the common belief that they were once men themselves and invented the art of fishing, and now after being changed by God's will into birds they still remember their old profession and haunt ports and cities.

'There are many kinds of gulls, some small and white as doves, while others are bigger and stronger, and covered with very thick plumage. Some are still larger. Their wings too are white, except that they have black tips and dark necks. And to these all the other gulls give way over food or station and treat them like kings. When they grow old their feathers become dark blue. They nest on the rocks, selecting a spot where there is a supply of fresh water, so that the young may receive food from the sea and fresh water to drink, until they are grown and able to fly from the nests, when they obtain both food and water from the sea. When it comes to fast swimming, the gull has no rival.'

The 'white' gulls, like Aristotle's were possibly little gulls (*larus*

minutus), which are the size of a turtle dove, and pale grey in winter. There is a colony in Rumania. The second class probably included Audouin's and the herring gull, while the third species could be, from the description, the great black-headed gull (*larus ichthyaetus*), which is now only a vagrant from European Russia and further east. But neither Aristotle nor Dionysius were reporting at first hand. The reference to the change of plumage from the immature to the mature bird is most marked in the case of the herring gull. The statement that the gull is a fast swimmer is untrue. Aelian[4] rightly observes that gulls open shell fish by dropping them from a height.

For gulls as soul birds see chap. XXII; for association with Heracles see chap. XVI; in augury see chap. XIII.

SHEARWATER (AITHUIA)

Both the Levantine (*puffinus yelkouan*) and Cory's shearwater (*puffinus diomedea*) are native to Greece, while the great shearwater (*puffinus kuhli*) also occurs. The identification, however, of *aithuia* with shearwater is insecure. It was regarded as voracious. 'Shearwaters are voracious seekers after food and will never go hungry', Dionysius[5] avers, while Cyranides[6] defines it as 'an insatiable sea bird, familiar to all'. The best description of a shearwater in flight is in Homer's *Odyssey*[7] where the god Hermes skimming the waves is likened to a 'gull-like bird, which dips its swift wings in the surge, fishing the dire hollows of the barren sea'.

It was associated by poets with storms and ship-wrecks.[8] Aristotle[9] thought it laid its eggs on rocks, like the gull, only earlier in the season, when in fact it nests in burrows. It was also regarded as a silent bird, which it is, except at night during the breeding season.[10]

For the Birds of Diomedes see chap. X; for the shearwater as a storm prophet see chap. XIII; for a transformation into a shearwater see chaps XVIII and XIX.

TERN (KATARRAKTES – DIVER, KAYAX)

Several species of tern are either resident, or found in Greek waters, e.g. the common tern (*sterna hirundo*) the gull-billed (*gelochelidon nilotica*) the Caspian (*hydroprogne caspia*), the sandwich (*sterna sandvicensis*) and the little tern (*sterna albifrons*).

The Ancients did not differentiate between the various species, though they were familiar enough with the 'diver' and its cry 'kauax' or 'kex'.

Dionysius' description, as with the gulls, is excellent. 'There is a kind of bird, resembling the smaller gulls, but violent [referring doubtless to its headlong dive] and white in colour. It is hawk-like and known as the Diver. After seeing some fish swimming about (for its sight can plumb the depths of the sea) it soars up to a great height and closing its wings plummets down, as though falling, into the sea, slicing the air swifter than an arrow. It dives to a depth of a fathom or more. After catching a fish it emerges and eats it while it's still kicking.'

He adds the information that they perch on rocks and lay their eggs among weed. But his subsequent description of male terns picking up the eggs containing male chicks and dropping them into the sea, only to retrieve them again before they touched the water, while their mates did the same, was probably based, as has been recently suggested,[12] on a misunderstanding of the activities of sea-birds raiding one another's nests. Old terns perished when their eyesight failed, and they dived on to rocks in mistake for the sea!

Homer knew the tern as the 'kex'. In the *Odyssey*[13] the Swine-Herd tells Odysseus about his wicked nurse, who was smitten by Artemis and fell into the hold 'like a sea-tern'. The identity of the bird was confirmed by an ancient commentator[14] who described it as 'resembling a swallow'.

CORMORANT (KORAX)

The Mediterranean cormorant (*phalocrocorax carbo sinensis*), and Mediterranean shag (*phalocrocorax pygmaeus*) are found in Greece. Aristotle's[15] description suits the Mediterranean cormorant, much darker than our bird. 'The so-called "water raven" is the size of a stork, but with shorter legs. It is web-footed, and a swimmer, and its colour is black. It perches on trees and alone of such birds makes its nest there.' The description of the nest suits the Mediterranean cormorant too rather than the shag.

PELICAN (PELEKAN, PELEKINOS)

Both the white (*pelecanus onocrotalus*) and the Dalmatian pelican (*pelecanus crispus*) occur in Greece,[16] but the former is a winter visitor.

The Ancients were more interested in the fables told about the pelican, and the descriptions are consequently cursory. 'They migrate', says Aristotle[17] 'and fly from the river Strymon [Macedonia] to the Hister [Danube] and there breed [he is evidently referring to the white race]. They leave in flocks and the leaders wait for those in the rear,

because, when they cross the intervening range those in the rear lose sight of the leaders.' Later he gives an entirely false and fanciful account of the bird's method of feeding. 'Pelicans living by rivers swallow big, smooth shells. After cooking them in the pouch in front of the stomach they vomit them up, so that when they are open they may pick out the flesh and eat it.'[18] In fact the pelican catches fish in its bill and so fills its pouch.[19]

Dionysius[20] also described the pelican's feeding habits, repeating the curious solecism about shell-fish. 'Pelicans have very long necks and are just as voracious as shearwaters. They do not, however, dive completely under water, but dip their necks, which are six feet long, keeping their backs above water. Every fish they find they swallow, catching them in their huge bills. In front they have a kind of pouch into which they put all their food, refraining neither from cockels or hard mussels, but gulping everything down shells and all. When the creatures are dead they vomit up, eating the flesh and expelling the shells.'

For the pelican's proverbial piety see chap. XXI.

CHAPTER VII

RAPTORIAL BIRDS

'Vulture, eagle, hawk were practically synonymous, and even many of the larger sea birds were loosely thought of as eagles. When the natural historian begins their classification, starting from the popular notions, they are driven to all kinds of absurdities.' (W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination*).

Both vultures and eagles are still comparatively common in Greece. The cliffs above Delphi,[1] the rocks of the Meteora[2] and the precipitous vale of Tempe[3] being especially favoured haunts. They are also to be seen in the neighbourhood of Mount Olympus, on the high ranges of Arcadia and even close to Athens on Hymettos and Parnes. They are found also in Crete and Anatolia.

EAGLE (AETOS)

Of the true eagles no less than eight species are resident in Greece *viz* the imperial (*aquila heliaca*), golden (*aquila chrysaetos*), white-tailed (*heliaetus albicilla*), Bonelli's (*hieraetus fasciatus*), lesser spotted (*aquila pomarina*), short-toed (*circaetus gallicus*) and booted (*hieraetus pennatus*). Others, like the spotted eagle (*aquila clanga*), occur on passage.

Aristotle[4] distinguished six species, though his accounts are confused and identification insecure. Neither does he say that he is describing species exclusive to Greece, though this is a natural inference. 'There are several kinds of eagles. One of them is called the "white-tailed eagle". It is found in plains, groves and in the neighbourhood of towns. Some call it the "fawn-killer". It is bold enough to fly to mountains and forests. The others rarely frequent plains and groves (This could be the short-toed eagle, which has white underparts and frequents plains and woodlands, as well as mountains).

'Another kind of eagle is called the *plangos*. It comes second in size and strength. It inhabits valleys, combes and lakes. It is also called the "duck-hawk" and *morphnos*. Homer refers to it in the Departure of Priam ['duck-hawk' and 'lakes' suggest a harrier and the marsh harrier (*circus aeruginosus*) is resident in Greece. But it could also refer to the lesser spotted eagle, which favours water too].

'Yet another is black in colour and the smallest but boldest of all. Its

habitat is mountains and forests. It is known as the "black eagle" and "hare-killer". It alone rears its young and conducts them from the nest. It is a swift flyer, tidy in its habits and a stranger to envy and fear. It is a redoubtable adversary and a good omen. It neither wails or screams [there is much that is fanciful here, but the more specific details suit Bonelli's eagle, still perhaps the commonest in Greece].

'There is another kind, the "dusky winged", very large with a white head, short wings and long rump, resembling a vulture. It is known as the "mountain stork" or the "half-eagle". It inhabits groves and possesses all the worst qualities of the other species and none of the good. It is caught and harried by ravens and other birds. It is sluggish on the wing and leads a hard life, preying on carrion. It is always mewing and wailing for food.'

This is clearly a composite description, referable to several different species. Some details suggest the lammergeyer (*gypaetus barbatus*), e.g. the great size, white head, long rump and vulture-like habits. But the lammergeyer has long, not short wings and inhabits mountain regions, not groves. Other details, e.g. short wings and frequenting groves suit the goshawk (*accipiter gentilis*) while the sheer size, white head and sluggishness on the wing might apply to the imperial eagle. The account seems inextricably confused.

The description of the sea-eagle is far more factual and accurate. 'Another variety of eagles is that known as the sea-eagles. They have a big thick neck, angled wings, a broad tail and live in the neighbourhood of sea capes. When they seize a victim and are unable to carry it off they are often forced down into the water.'[5] Later he mentions the sea-eagle's sharp sight, with a fanciful account of its offspring. 'The sea-eagle has the sharpest sight of all birds and forces its offspring, while still nestlings, to gaze at the sun. The one which refuses to do so it strikes and turns out and whichever's eyes water is the one it rears. It lives by the sea and feeds by hunting sea-birds, as has been mentioned. When hunting it snatches them one by one, watching to see when they emerge from a dive. For whenever a bird emerges and sees the sea-eagle it takes fright and dives with the intention of rising again in another spot. But the eagle pursues it, relying on its sharp sight, until it either drowns it or catches it on the surface. It never attacks a flock of birds, for they ward him off by wetting him with spray from their wings.'[6]

The sea-eagle, or erne, now extinct in Britain, and very rare elsewhere in northern Europe, is still found in Thrace. In ancient times it was obviously commoner and impressed the poets by its size and speed.

Pindar[7] refers to it 'zooming beyond the ocean', while Euripides[8] says 'I behold on the cliffs the wandering sea-eagle, plunderer of the waves.' Again the Sire-Striker in the *Birds*[9] longs to 'soar like an eagle and fly over the barren sea.' 'Yet another species', Aristotle[10] goes on, 'is the eagle they term "thoroughbred". They claim that these alone of all birds are pure bred. For the other species are mixed and corrupted by interbreeding whether eagles, hawks or the smaller birds. It is the biggest eagle of all, bigger than the lammergeyer, half as large again as the general run of eagles and has golden plumage. Like the so-called *kymindis* it is rarely seen.' Despite the error about its size, for it is smaller than the lammergeyer, the description must refer to the golden eagle, the finest (the sea-eagle is larger) and most typical of all. Aelian[11] also mentions the golden eagle (*chrysaetos*) which he claims drives bulls over cliffs.

Aristotle[12] concludes his section on eagles with an interesting, and, for the most part, acceptable account of the bird's habits. 'The hours during which the eagle hunts and flies are from midday until evening. During the morning it remains inactive until midday. When it grows old the upper half of the beak grows more and more crooked and it ends by dying of hunger. [For the following fable that it was once a man see chap. XIX.] It puts any extra food on one side for its young, for since it is not easy to obtain food every day, they sometimes return empty handed. If they catch anyone spying round their eyries they beat them with their wings and tear them with their talons. They build their eyries not on the ground but in lofty places, mostly on inaccessible cliffs but sometimes in trees. They feed their young until they are able to fly. They then eject them from the eyrie and drive them away from the immediate vicinity. One pair of eagles occupies a vast territory, which is why they refuse to allow others to live near them.

'The eagle does not hunt in the neighbourhood of its eyrie, but only at a considerable distance from it. When it has hunted and captured its prey it puts it down and does not carry it away at once, and if it finds it too heavy it leaves it behind. It does not catch hares on sight, but first lets them proceed into the open. It then does not descend directly to the ground, but comes down gradually in decreasing circles. In either case it acts with caution to avoid being trapped. It perches on high places because it is slow to rise from the ground. It flies high in order to obtain the most panoramic view. That is why alone among birds men term it divine. All birds of prey perch very seldom on rocks, because the lack of holds impedes their grip. The eagle hunts hares, fawns, foxes and all

the other animals it can master. It is long-lived, which is clear from the continued use of the same eyrie in the same spot.'

Elsewhere Aristotle[13] informs us that the eagle lays three eggs, but only hatches one and that it starves while brooding. In fact the normal clutch is two eggs, while the brooding bird is fed by its mate. It was also believed that the eagle never drank water.[14] Pausanias'[15] mysterious reference to a white eagle has been considered a mistake for a white heron.

For the eagle and augury see chap. XIII and for innumerable fables chap. XXI. For the eagle as a solar emblem see chap. XII, and in medicinal contexts see chap. XIV. For the eagle and Zeus see chap. XVI; in myth chap. XIX and as a soul bird chap. XXII.

LAMMERGEYER OR BEARDED VULTURE (PHENE, HARPE, AIGYPIOS)

The great lammergeyer (*gypaetus barbatus*) whose wings span nine feet, is still found in the remoter mountain ranges of Greece, Crete and Anatolia. It favours rocky ravines, and has been recently observed in the Pleistos gorge at Delphi.[16] Dionysius[17] gives a detailed and generally accurate description of this magnificent bird, under 'Harpies', though it was known to Homer as the *phene* or the *aigypios*.

'Harpies are rarely seen, for they inhabit the most precipitous cliffs. They nest in rocky ravines. Their cheeks and chins are feathered, which form a beard which extends to the neck. And the beard is the harpy's unique characteristic. It alone of birds feeds on stones and the bones of beasts long dead. If they can gulp it down they quickly and easily swallow whatever comes to hand, but if it is too big they pick it up in their talons, soar aloft and let it fall on the rocks so that they may smash and eat it.' (Hence the legend that the poet Aeschylus died when a lammergeyer in Sicily dropped a bone on his bald head.)[18] Lammergeyers do not, in fact, swallow stones, but smash bones in order to get at the marrow.

Aristotle[19] describes the *phene* as 'larger than an eagle and of an ashy hue', which is accurate as far as it goes. He also says that it has a film over its eyes and has poor vision.[20] In fact the lammergeyer has an impressive blood-red sclerotic, but its sight is, of course, unimpaired. Aelian[21] defined the *aigypios* as 'half-way between vulture and eagle', a good description of the lammergeyer.

It was said from Homer[22] on to be particularly attached to its offspring, and to wail if its eyrie were attacked. There was clearly confusion with other eagles here since the lammergeyer is silent and its

eyrie normally inaccessible.[23] Also it does not attack living prey as the *aigypios* was said to do.[24] Like the vulture it prefers carrion.[25]

For metamorphosis into a lammergeyer see chaps XVIII and XIX. For its magical and medicinal properties see chap. XIV.

VULTURE (GYPS)

All three European species of vulture are found in Greece, of which the largest and rarest is the black vulture (*aegypius monachus*), the somewhat smaller, but otherwise similar, griffon vulture (*gyps fulvus*) and the small, but distinctive, Egyptian vulture (*neophron percnopterus*).

Vultures are frequently seen wheeling about the cliffs at Delphi, Tempe and the Meteora, as well as the higher mountain ranges in Anatolia, Crete and elsewhere. Gyps was the normal name for vultures in Homer[26] and later poets, who emphasized their carrion habits and powers of prognosticating slaughter.[27] Aristotle[28] only distinguished two species 'the smaller and whiter [i.e. the Egyptian vulture] and the larger and darker'.

Little was known of their nesting habits and Aelian[29] actually recorded that they were all of the female sex and produced feathered offspring! But Aristotle[30] knew better. 'It nests on inaccessible cliffs, and that is why its nest and young are rarely observed. Hence Herodorus, father of the sophist Bryson, declares that vultures arrive from some foreign and unknown land, and advances in proof of his statement that no one has ever seen a vulture's nest, and that vast numbers appear mysteriously in the wake of armies. Nevertheless, despite the difficulties involved, a vulture's nest has been seen. They lay two eggs.'

The ability of vultures to arrive suddenly at a kill naturally perplexed the Ancients. Dionysius[31] gives a good description of vultures quarrelling over a feast. 'The stronger bird chases away the others, extending one wing like a shield while fending off the rest with the other. When it has had its fill the others attack the meal in concert until one of them in turn drives off the weaker.' He adds that they delight so much in foul smells that they will actually reject flesh which has been treated with myrrh.

For the vulture in medicine see chap. XIV.

HAWK AND FALCON (HIERAX, KIRKOS)

The peregrine falcon (*falco peregrinus*) and similar lanner (*falco biarmicus*) are both resident in Greece, as well as the goshawk (*accipiter gentilis*) and its smaller cousins the sparrow hawk (*accipter nisus*) and

Levantine sparrow hawk (*accipter brevipes*), buzzard (*buteo buteo*), long-legged buzzard (*buteo rufinus*), honey buzzard (*pernis apivorus*) and the little hobby (*falco subbuteo*) and Eleonara's falcon (*falco eleonara*). The merlin (*falco columbarius*) is only a winter visitor. The marsh harrier (*circus aeruginosus*) also nests in Greece, while the hen harrier (*circus cyaneus*) and pallid harrier (*circus macrouros*) are winter visitors, as is the osprey (*pandion haliaetus*) and red-footed falcon (*falco vespertinus*). The saker[32] (*falco cherrug*) has been recently recorded.

Homer[33] mentions a falcon pursuing a rock dove (presumably a peregrine) and scattering daws and starlings (sparrow hawk?).[34] Aristotle[35] mentions ten species, not all of which are identifiable. 'Of the hawks', he says 'the strongest is the buzzard [probably the larger long-legged race], the second in boldness the aisalon [merlin?] while the *kirkos* [lanner?] ranks third. Other kinds are the asterias [i.e. 'starred' – presumably a reference, like the bittern's, to the goshawk's plumage] the pigeon hawk [the peregrine?] and the *pternis*. ['talon striker'?] The broader winged hawks are called half-buzzards [the common buzzard and honey buzzard?] others *perkoi* [i.e. 'dark' hobbies?] and sparrow hawks, still others harriers or toad-catchers. These birds experience no difficulty in finding food and fly low over the ground.

'They say there are no less than ten species of hawk and that they all differ from one another. Some attack the pigeon while it is on the ground and carry it off, but never touch it in flight. Others assail it in a tree or other perch, but do not touch it while it is on the ground or in the air. Still others endeavour to make their captures on the wing and never on the ground or while the victim is perching. And they say that pigeons can recognize each kind so that when the assailant belongs to the class which captures its prey on the wing they remain where they are, but if to that which attacks sitting birds they fly off!'

Aristotle[36] apparently knew that hawks were migratory since they were absent, or so he believed, when the cuckoo arrived. They brooded, like the kite, for about twenty days,[37] and nested in inaccessible places.[38] The curious belief that the species interbred[39] may have arisen from the difference in plumage between e.g. male and female sparrow-hawk, and in size between the sexes of all species.

For the hawk as a sacred bird see chap. XVI; in fable chap. XXI; in magic and medicine chap. XIV. For falconry see chap. XI.

EAGLE OWL (KYMINDIS? HYBRIS? BYAS)

The great eagle owl (*bubo bubo*) is a rare resident in Greece. In Homer[40]

Sleep takes the form of an unknown bird, *kymindis*, whose alternative name he says was *chalkis*, which has been taken to mean 'bronzy', a good description of the colour of the eagle owl. Interpreting the word in this sense the ancient commentator describes the colour of the *kymindis* as 'dark and verging on bronze', though there is no certainty that *chalkis* is connected with *chalkos*-bronze. Aristotle's[41] account suits the eagle owl in some respects, but not in others. 'The *kymindis* is rarely seen, since it lives among mountains. It is dark in colour and about the size of a peregrine [in fact it is very much larger]. It is long and thin in shape [inaccurate]. The Ionians call it the *kymindis* and Homer mentions it in the *Iliad* when he says "The gods call it *chalkis*, but men *kymindis*".

'The *hybris*, which is said to be the same as the *kymindis*, does not appear by day, because its sight is then dim, but hunts like an eagle at night. It engages in such bitter struggles with the eagle that both are often captured alive by shepherds. It lays two eggs and nests among rocks and in caves.'

Some of the details given here have been corroborated by modern ornithologists e.g. the rivalry with the eagle,[42] but the identifications of *kymindis* and *hybris* with the eagle owl remain insecure.

However Aristotle's[43] description of the *byas* 'the same shape as an owl but as big as an eagle' clearly refers to this species. For the *kymindis* see further chap. XVIII.

CHAPTER VIII

LARGE BIRDS

CRANE (GERANOS)

The loud cry of migrating cranes (*megalornis grus*) passing in skeins from North Africa to their breeding places in the marshy areas of northern Europe (which until the draining of the fens included East Anglia) was a familiar sound to the ancient Greeks. 'From Ethiopia and the streams of Egypt cometh the high flying chorus of airy voiced cranes', sang Oppian,[1] while Herodotus[2] mentioned the flocks wintering on the Nile. Aristotle[3] says they winter at the Nile's source. In fact they do not migrate so far inland. Cranes often fly high above the line of vision, but their loud trumpet is still audible from the clouds. Homer[4] likened the clamour of the Trojan host to that of migrating cranes. Schliemann,[5] during his excavations at Troy a hundred years ago, comments on the cranes. 'Cranes do not remain in the Troad during the summer, but migrate northward in immense swarms in March, and return in August to more congenial climes.'

To Hesiod[6] its cry warned farmers that it was time to plough.

Aelian[7] states that cranes were resident in Thrace, though it is in the north-western portions of the Balkan peninsula that they still nest today. He gives a typically fanciful account of their habits of migration.

'And when they have passed a milder winter here [i.e. in Libya, Egypt and Ethiopia] and fine calm weather begins they return again from whence they came. They appoint flight commanders, who are familiar with the route and who would naturally be among the older birds, whose duties include bringing up the rear. When they find a favourable wind blowing from behind, for they also make use of a pilot to drive them on, they form an acute-angled triangle in their flight so that when they take to the air they may cleave it and most easily complete their journey. Yet men marvel at the wisdom of the Persian king in taking advantage of the weather, praising the same monarch's journeys to and from Susa to Ecbatana. When, however, they spy an eagle swooping on them they form a circle, close ranks with a crescent in the centre and threaten to form a line of defence. The eagle flaps its wings and withdraws. Then propping their beaks on the

backs of the leaders they link their flight together, lightening their labours by resting on one another in turn.

'When they have found peace in a remote area the remainder rest and sleep during the night while three or four stand on guard, and to prevent them falling asleep they stand on one leg, while they firmly hold a stone in the claw of the other leg, which they hold aloft, so that if overcome by sleep the noise of the falling stone will wake them. The stone which the crane swallows for ballast in flight is a touch-stone of gold. When, so to speak, coming to port it arrives at the place it intended it vomits it up again.'[8] Aristotle,[9] however, flatly denies the tale about the ballast stone, which was already familiar to Aristophanes.[10] Nevertheless he found many indications of wisdom among the cranes.

'Many facts also demonstrate intelligence among cranes. For example they migrate over immense distances and fly high in order to command a wide view. If they see clouds and stormy weather they fly down and rest. They also have a leader and signallers on the flanks so that all can hear. When they settle the remainder rest with their heads under their wings, standing on each leg in turn. Meantime the leader keeps his head out and remains on guard, and when he scents danger, he gives a warning sign.'[11] Aristotle[12] mistook the crane's graceful dance in spring for fighting. 'Cranes also fight so viciously among themselves that they are taken while so engaged. For they refuse to stop. They lay two eggs.' He also comments on the bird's mating habits 'as speedy as the cock's'.[13] One can only suppose that he derived his information from local Macedonian sources.

The smaller demoiselle crane (*anthropoides virgo*), with its large eye tufts, figures prominently on Geometric vases, but was not apparently distinguished from the common crane by the ancient authorities.[14]

The migrations of cranes appealed to the poetic imagination. 'O winging long-necks,' sang Euripides'[15] chorus, 'partners of the racing clouds, pass beneath the Pleiads at the zenith and Orion in the night. Deliver the news as you settle on the banks of the Eurotas that Menelaus having taken Dardanus' city will be returning here.'

For the myths of the cranes and the Pygmies and Ibycus see chap. XXI; for cranes as weather signs see chap. XII; as food see chap. XI.

WHITE STORK (PELARGOS)

The white stork (*ciconia ciconia*) is resident in northern Greece and may be seen nesting among the ruins of Philippi.[16] It is also common in

Anatolia, but was more familiar to the Ancients on migration. Schliemann[17] rightly suspected that since Homer fails to mention the stork he probably confused it with the crane.

Aelian[18] noted that when storks returned to their homes at the end of winter they were able to recognize their own nest as easily as men recognize their houses. The punctuality of their migrations was also observed,[19] though the location of their winter home was unknown.[20] This was scarcely surprising since the stork wanders in winter as far as South Africa. The stork is omnivorous and fond of locusts. It is certainly a snake killer, as Jackson[21] records, and for this reason it was honoured by the Thessalians. 'In the neighbourhood of Thessaly they recall that snakes bred in such numbers that had the storks failed to destroy them the inhabitants would have emigrated. Hence they honour the storks and it is unlawful to slay them. Should anyone do so he is regarded as guilty of murder.'[22]

For the stork's filial piety see chap. XXI; for transformations see chap. XIX.

GREAT BUSTARD (OTIS, BRADYPETES)

The name *otis*, connected with 'ous' – ear, would be more naturally applicable to the tufted houbara bustard (*chlamydotis undulata*) which is, however, only a vagrant to Greece. The little bustard (*otis tetrax*) also occurs. *Bradypetes* – Slow-Foot – is a good description of the great bustard's dignified progress.

The great bustard was formerly resident in the north-eastern part of the Balkan peninsula and will have been familiar to ancient Macedonians. Aristotle[23] compares it in size to the fabulous Scythian bird. His more detailed description seems, however, to refer to the little bustard. 'It is one of the migrating birds and has three parted toes; of the size of a large cock [the great bustard is turkey-size], coloured like a quail, with a long head and sharp beak, thin neck, big eyes, bony tongue and no crop.'[24]

Alexander of Myndos[25] knew the great bustard as the *lagodias* – 'hare-like', presumably from its feathered feet. It was also said to chew the cud,[26] to be fond of horses[27] and to be caught by hunters wearing horse disguise. According to Oppian[28] it actually mated with horses! Xenophon[29] refers to coursing bustards and Plutarch[30] to the popularity of the houbara bustard as food.

For possible representations of the great bustard on Greek vases see S. Benton, 'Cattle Egrets and Bustards in Greek Art', *JHS*, 1961 pp. 44 ff.

OSTRICH (STROUTHOS, STROUTHOKAMELOS)

The Ancients were familiar both with the North African ostrich (*struthio camelus camelus*) and the now extinct Syrian or Arabian ostrich (*struthio camelus syriacus*).[31] Herodotus[32] refers to the former, describing how the Macae of Libya used ostrich skins as shields, while Xenophon[33] says Arabian birds outdistanced horsemen 'by their speed of running and employing their wings like sails.'

'It possesses', says Aristotle,[34] 'both bird features and those of a four-footed beast. Not being a beast it possesses wings, but not being entirely a bird it does not fly in the air and its wings are unserviceable for flight and hairlike. Yet as being a four-footed beast it has eyelashes, but is naked about the head and the upper parts of the neck, with the result that its eyelashes are all the more hairy. As being a bird it is feathered in its upper parts, and has a bird's two legs, though cloven-footed like a beast. For it lacks toes but possesses hooves and the reason is that its size is not that of a bird but that of a beast.' Pausanias[35] also commented on the ostrich's inability to fly owing to its weight and size. It was believed to fend off pursuers by slinging stones with its feet,[36] while only the titmouse laid more eggs.[37] The Ancients were familiar with ostrich plumes[38] and also with the bird in harness.[39]

For its capture and use as food see chap. XI; in medicine see chap. XIV; in fable see chap. XXI.

CHAPTER IX

DOMESTIC BIRDS

GOOSE (CHEN)

Geese were domesticated in Greece long before the fowl. In the *Odyssey*[1] a flock of geese was clearly regarded as a valuable asset, not unworthy even of a queen's attention. Penelope kept a flock of twenty, of which she confesses she was very fond. She fed them on wheat from a trough and describes her great sorrow when she dreamed that an eagle swooped down and killed them all.

Earlier in the same work an eagle had appeared while her son Telemachus was addressing King Menelaus, grasping a white goose in its talons.[2] Tame geese were thus part of the Odyssean scene, but play no part in the *Iliad*. They were descended from grey lag geese (*anser anser*) which still breed in Macedonia.

Sophocles[3] referred to tame geese and pigeons, while Plato[4] describes the murder of a Macedonian princeling, who was said to have tumbled into a well while chasing a goose. Elsewhere he mentions the existence of both 'goose pens' and 'crane pens'[5] in Thessaly, where the birds were bred for food. The Byzantine *Geoponica*,[6] a treatise on Agriculture, gives some hints on keeping geese. 'Be careful to choose the biggest and whitest geese. Put your goose pen in a place with good pasture and plenty of water. Geese should be fed entirely on pulse, without any vetch. They should also be given wild lettuce leaves. But stop them eating mule grass since it causes indigestion. They lay up to twelve eggs three times a year and sometimes more, some of which must be put under hens. Goslings must be kept indoors to begin with but when the sunny weather comes it is time for us to lead them out to pasture, and to water when they have had their fill of food. Care must be taken that they are not stung by nettles or pricked by thorns.'

Aristotle[7] mentions the goose's webbed feet among other anatomical features, submersion after mating[8] and loud cackle.[9] The gander did not brood, but the goose sat for thirty days[10] on eggs which were large and white.[11]

For the goose as food see chap. XI; in medicine see chap. XIV; in myth and fable see chap. XXI.

COCK (ALEKTOR, ALEKTRYON)

The farmyard cock (*gallus gallinaceus*), to judge from the archaeological evidence, reached Greece via Persia in the seventh century BC[12]. It was unknown to Homer and Hesiod. Although 'cock' was employed without sexual distinction 'bird' was the normal designation of the hen. The first reference to the cock in literature occurs in Theognis[13] (sixth century BC), 'I will come out in the evening and will return at dawn when the cocks begin to crow.'

It was described by Aristophanes[14] as the 'Persian Bird'. 'I will first take the cock as an example, who reigned as sole monarch and ruled the Persians earliest of all, long before Darius and Megabazus. And so he is still called the Persian bird after that empire.'

Cocks are described by Aristotle[15] as 'gentle, ground-dwelling, dust-loving, heavy, flightless, short-sighted, with feathered wings (unlike bats or insects) and lecherous. They possess a crop in front of the stomach and wattles.'

The cock's comb was the most characteristic physical feature. 'Yes and for this very reason', Aristophanes[16] goes on 'he alone of all the birds struts about like the Great King with a stiff tiara on his head.' 'Several birds have crests,' says Aristotle,[17] 'some of which stick up from the feathers themselves. But the cock's comb is unique, for it is not composed of flesh, but is flesh-like.'

Cocks also possessed spurs, which they employed to deadly purpose in cock-fights. Men who bullied their fathers used their fists in the same way. 'If the law holds it a scandal to strike one's father here, it's all right with us there, if anyone runs up to his sire slaps him hard and says "Put up your spurs, if you want to fight." ' So said Aristophanes,[18] with heavy irony, glancing at the young thugs of his day.

Both Pindar[19] and Aeschylus[20] mentioned the cock's pugnacity, while Aristotle[21] avers that when a hen defeated a cock it changed sex and crowed. The cock, on the other hand, was believed to cease to crow and rear the chicks if the hen died.[22] The hen laid eggs all the year round, with only two months rest. Some were said to lay twice a day in spring, while some died after proving too prolific layers.[23] Pullets began to lay at the beginning of spring. They laid more eggs than full-grown hens, but the eggs were smaller.[24] Hens' eggs hatched within eighteen days in summer, and twenty-five in winter.[25]

Both Plato[26] and Aristotle[27] distinguished high-bred and low-bred domestic fowls. The higher breeds laid less eggs than inferior ones.

'Adriatic hens are small,' says Aristotle,[28] 'but lay every day. They are ill-tempered and often kill their chicks. Their plumage is varied.' These were presumably a bantam breed.

Pausanias[29] mentions two breeds at Tanagra in Boeotia. One was coal-black in colour with crests and wattles 'like anemones'. They also had white markings on their beak and tail. The other breed were kept for fighting. Ptolemy[30] (second century AD) knew of a race of bearded cocks in the far east, i.e. with ruffs, while Ctesias[31] (fifth century BC), the Greek doctor who officiated at the Persian court, and Aelian[32] describe the beautiful gold and blue Impeyan pheasant (*lophophorus impejanus*) of the Himalayas as 'large fowls'.

The cock's crow, as heralding the dawn, is frequently referred to from Theognis[33] onward. 'We too bow towards the east', said Theocritus,[34] 'whenever the Bard first summons us from our beds, raising his well-featherd neck.'

For cock-fighting see chap. XI; for the cock as a sacred bird see chap. XVI; for the cock in fable see chap. XXI.

The cock figured prominently in Greek art.

DOMESTIC PIGEON (PERISTERA)

Peristera was the generic name for pigeons, including both the domestic species (*columba livia*) and the rock dove, from which the European tame stock is descended. White doves were first observed in Greece in 492 BC off Mount Athos during the disaster which befell Mardonius' fleet. Whether they subsequently became popular with pigeon-fanciers we do not know, but, according to Charon of Lampsacus,[35] whose *History of Persia* was said to antedate Herodotus, this was the first occasion on which white pigeons were seen in Greece.

Plato[36] mentions dove-cotes, whose construction is described in detail in the *Geoponica*.[37] 'Choose fine weather when building a dove-cote and be careful to protect it against the assaults of harmful creatures. Don't be stingy about nesting-boxes, but cover the walls from the floor to the roof. Some call them "nests", but we term them "pots" for pairs to live and breed in. You must also put boards beside each nest to provide means of access and furnish the dove-cote with ablutions of adequate size for drinking and bathing. But care must be taken not to disturb the pigeons unnecessarily about water because it does more harm than good. On the other hand they must not be left entirely unattended for the cote has to be swept clean from time to time and the droppings removed, despite the considerable inconvience involved,

with the object of getting rid of snakes and similar pests. My own method of denying access to snakes is to choose a secluded spot with no houses in the vicinity and to get hold of eight columns, or more if I intent to construct a larger building. These I set up in a circle and crown with capitals and stone architraves, or strong wooden ones if stone ones are not available. I erect two dove-cotes over the columns, some twelve feet high with a window in the walls facing west to light the building and another facing east, furnished with a trap-door, through which the pigeons can come out and forage. There is also a door facing south for the use of the custodian. By taking these precautions I keep my pigeons safe. No snake can get in since the columns are carefully coated with stucco and smoothed. They are also immune from the assaults of cats and other beasts since there are no houses near from which to make their attacks. Finally if you want to start a dove-cote don't begin with young birds but with mature stock. If you start with ten couples they will quickly multiply.'

Doubtless few dove-cotes attained the degree of magnificence recommended in the *Geoponica*, but it is interesting evidence of the lengths to which pigeon-fanciers were prepared to go if they possessed the necessary resources.

Aristotle describes the domestic pigeon with perfect accuracy as gregarious,[38] plump[39] and grass-eating.[40] It dusts itself and bathes[41] and lives for eight years.[42] Its coo is 'like a grumble'[43] and it is the prey of falcons.[44] He also refers to the iridescent sheen on its plumage. 'The pigeon's upper parts seem to shine like gold with reflected light.'[45] Philo[46] (second century BC) of Larissa's description is more detailed. 'Didn't you notice the pigeon's neck changing to a thousand hues in the sun's rays, and that it displays not only purple, blue, fiery or black but yellow, red and colours of every kind?'

Aristotle[47] praises its affectionate nature. 'They kiss one another, whenever the male intends to mate. Otherwise the older birds would refuse to mate at first; but do so later without kissing. The younger birds always kiss before mating and even the females mate, whenever a male isn't present, kissing like the males, and without fertilizing one another produce more eggs than when fertilized. The eggs produce no squab but all such are wind-eggs.'

Domestic pigeons were said to be extremely fertile and to lay and produce young at any time, up to ten or more times a year providing circumstances were suitable. If not, then only during the summer.[48] The eggs produced a pigeon pair and it was believed that the male

squab was hatched first. The young flew within fourteen days of hatching.[49] The pigeon's concern for its mate and offspring is referred to both by Aristotle and Aelian in highly fanciful terms. The males were actually said to share their mates' birth-pangs[50] and to force them to brood if they wandered from the nest. The male was also said to share in the rearing of the squabs,[51] which, according to Oppian,[52] had purple plumage if the breeder took the trouble to put purple cloths by the hens at mating time!

The fidelity and chastity of the domestic pigeon was proverbial and couples which lost their partners were said never to remate.[53] Carrier pigeons were known to the Greeks. In a play by the comic poet Pherecrates[54] (fifth century BC) someone says 'Send the news by pigeon post.' Again, in a fragment of lyric poetry a pigeon speaks. 'Anacreon sent me to the boy, Bathyllus. But I, his beloved pigeon, serve Anacreon[55] so often. Now, as you see, I am carrying his letter!'

According to Aelian[56] when Taurosthenes was victorious in the wrestling match at Olympia his father in Aegina received the news by carrier pigeon the same day.

For pigeons as decoys see chap. XI; as sacred birds see chap. XVI; in a divine transformation chap. XVIII.

PEACOCK (TAHOS)

The peacock reached Greece from India via Persia, like the domestic cock, and, like it, was known as the 'Persian bird'.[57] Its Greek name *tahos* was speciously derived from *tasis* meaning 'stretching', with reference to the bird's train.[58] Probably it is Persian.[59] Peacocks were apparently first encountered by the Greeks in Samos,[60] a circumstance which doubtless brought it into association with Hera who was worshipped there.

During the Peloponnesian War (late fifth century BC) peafowl kept by a certain Demos in Athens excited such curiosity that people travelled far and wide to view them and to obtain a supply of eggs. The birds were kept in a kind of private zoo, consisting of a double enclosure with guardians and keepers and were exhibited for a fee. Even so visits were restricted to the first day of the month only. So much we learn from the orator Antiphon[61] (fifth century BC) who mentioned peacocks in a speech. Both peacock and peahen were valued at 10,000 drachmae (say £1,000) according to the same authority.[62]

When the ambassadors from the king of Persia are announced in

Aristophanes' *Acharnians*[63] Dicaeopolis exclaims, 'I'm sick to death of ambassadors and their peacocks and their impostures', which suggests that they brought gifts of peacocks with them to Athens. Again when Tereus appears in the *Birds* in his brilliant actor's robes Euelpides inquires in mock wonder, 'Are you a bird or a peacock?'[64] Later in the same play he takes a flamingo for a peacock.[65] Clearly the word had acquired an aesthetic connotation for something outlandish and beautiful, but which, in Athens at least, was by then familiar to the audience.

Later comic poets were scathing about the money wasted on peacocks. 'Isn't it absurd', Anaxandrides[66] objected, 'to keep peacocks in the house when you could buy a pair of statues for the same money?' By the fourth century BC peacocks were said to be 'as common as quails',[67] whereas formerly they had been very rare. The birds were kept mainly for their beauty, but also for food.

Aelian[68] gives a detailed description of the peacock, which was bred in vast numbers in Rome. 'The peacock knows that it is the most beautiful of birds and also where its beauty lies and prides itself on it and is haughty and exults in its plumes, which are its crowning glory, and inspire awe in spectators. In summer they provide a covering of their own, unsought and natural. If for example it wants to frighten anyone it raises and shakes its train while uttering a loud screech and the bystanders are terrified as though scared by a warrior rattling his arms. It raises its head and nods most proudly as though shaking a triple crest. When it wants to cool itself it raises its feathers and bends them forward and so by exhibiting the natural shade from its body it wards off the heat of the sun. If there is a wind from behind it gradually opens its feathers and the breeze blowing through them gently and pleasantly enables the bird to cool itself. It knows when it has been praised and just as a handsome boy or beautiful woman displays that part of their person in which they excel so it raises its feathers in orderly procession. It resembles a flowery meadow or a picture embellished with every variety of colour and artists have to sweat blood to do justice to its true beauty. It demonstrates its generosity by willingly permitting the spectators to have their fill of viewing, turning about and displaying in detail the varied beauty of its plumage, demonstrating most proudly how its own apparel surpasses the robes of the Medes and the embroideries of the Persians. It is said to have reached Greece from foreign parts.' In fact the peacock originated in India where, as Aelian goes on to say, 'Alexander of Macedon was so amazed when he saw

these birds, and entranced by their beauty, that he threatened anyone who killed a peacock with the direst penalties.'

Dionysius[69] also praises the peacock's beauty and its reaction to praise. 'It immediately gets up and displays the golden flowers of its plumage for all the world like a meadow, trailing them round in a circle studded with eyes, which gleam along its train like stars.'

The poet Moschus[70] (second century BC), the novelist Achilles Tatius[71] (second century AD) and the satirist Lucian[72] (second century AD) refer at length to the bird's remarkable beauty.

Aristotle[73] gives, characteristically, a more sober account. 'The peacock has divided toes, feeds on grass and lays when it is three years old, at which time it dons its varied plumage. It broods for thirty days and lays twelve eggs, not all at once, but two per day. Young peahens lay eight eggs. It also lays wind eggs like the hen, but nor more than two. It hatches and broods like the hen.'

Elsewhere Aristotle[74] informs us that the peacock 'moults when the first trees shed their leaves and recovers its plumage when they are regaining their foliage. Breeders put their eggs under a hen to hatch because the peacock treads the peahen while brooding and breaks the eggs. They never put more than two eggs under hens because that is all she can manage.'

For the peacock as a sacred bird see chap. XVI; as food see chap. XI; in magic and medicine see chap. XIV; in fable see chap. XXI.

PHEASANT (PHASIANOS)

When the pheasant (*phasianus colchicus*) was introduced into Greece is unknown. Aristophanes[75] mentions it in the *Birds*. 'I'm a pheasant, and a yellow-tailed one'.

The name derives from the river Phasis which flows through Colchis into the Black Sea. Agatharchides of Cnidus[76] (second century BC), author of a *History of Europe* no longer extant, stated that 'great numbers of these birds, known as pheasants, frequent the mouths of the river for food.'

Ptolemy Philadelphus[77] kept pheasants as an investment and not to eat himself, though their flesh was regarded as a rare delicacy. They were also kept in private parks in India (see chap. XV).[78]

Aristotle[79] rightly classed the pheasant as a 'ground' bird and not a flyer. He also mentions its fondness for dust-baths, but is guilty of exaggeration when he adds that if it failed to dust itself it would be destroyed by lice![80] He was wrong in stating that pheasants' eggs are

spotted.[81] Either he or Theophrastus, according to Athenaeus,[82] commented on the 'immeasurable superiority' of the cock's plumage to the hen's.

For the pheasant as food see chap. XI.

GUINEA-FOWL (MELEAGRIS)

The red-wattled guinea-fowl (*numida meleagris*) is a native of northern Africa and Arabia, but it is not known when or how it reached Greece. The blue-wattled species (*numida ptilorhyncha*), a native of Abyssinia, was said both by Strabo[83] and Diodorus[84] to inhabit an island in the Red Sea. The bird is first mentioned by Sophocles,[85] who associated it with India. But Pliny[86] takes him to task for stating that amber was formed from the tears shed for Meleager by the birds known as Meleager's daughters, i.e. guinea-fowls, from a fancied resemblance to the hero's name. The geographer and antiquarian Mnaseas[87] (third century B C) also scouted this legend.

The fullest description of the guinea-fowl is given by Clytus of Miletus,[88] a pupil of Aristotle. 'All around the temple of the Maiden in Leros are the birds known as guinea-fowl. The district where they are reared is marshy. The bird lacks affection for its offspring and neglects its chicks so that the priests are obliged to care for them. It is the size of of a well-bred cock. Its head is small in proportion to its body and bare. On it is a fleshy comb, stiff and curved, which projects from the head like a peg and is of the colour of wood. Attached to the cheeks, and beginning from the beak, is a large piece of flesh by way of a beard and redder than that of the cock. But it lacks the beard which grows on cock's beaks. So it is stunted at this point. The beak is sharper and longer than the cock's. The neck is black and thicker and shorter than the cock's. It is speckled all over with white feathers no bigger than beans. These little rings are set in lozenge shape, less black than the main plumage, whence the lozenges present a speckled appearance. Around the wings the bird's plumage is speckled with white in serrated and parallel patterns. Their legs lack spurs. The females resemble the males so that it is hard to distinguish the sex.'

Ptolemy Philadelphus[89] (see under *Pheasant*) mated guinea-fowl with pheasants or so it was believed.

For the guinea-fowl as food see chap. XI; for its sacral affinities see chap XVI; for the transformation of the sisters of Meleager into guinea-fowl see chap. XIX.

QUAIL (ORTYX)

The quail (*coturnix vulgaris*) was domesticated as a pet (see chap. XV) and for quail fighting and quail tapping (see chap. XI).

PARTRIDGE (PERDIX)

The partridge (*perdix graeca*) was domesticated like the quail for decoy purposes, see chap. XI, as a pet, see chap. XV, and for fighting, see chap. XI.

CHAPTER X

FABULOUS BIRDS

HALCYON (ALKYON, KERYLOS)

Greek birds sometimes acquired an accretion of unreal and imaginative features which were credited not only by the poets but by philosophers also. Most notable of these was the halcyon. Aristotle's[1] description of its nest has already been mentioned (chap. 1) but here is a fuller account. 'The nest resembles "sea-balls" or the so-called "sea-foam", apart from the colour. Its colour is reddish and its shape recalls that of long-necked gourds. In size it is bigger than the biggest sponge, but the sizes vary. They are covered in and present a succession of solid and hollow parts. If you try to break them open with a sharp knife they are hard to cut through, but if you cut and strike them with the hands they quickly shatter, like sea-foam. There is a small opening, just large enough to squeeze through, so that even if the nest is overturned the sea fails to get in. The cavities are similar to those of sponges and it is a mystery with what materials it makes its nest though possibly from the bones of gar-fish, for it lives by catching fish. It ascends rivers and lays five eggs at most. It breeds all its life and begins when it is four months old.'

Plutarch[2] describes the nest in similar detail, likening the finished product to a fisherman's creel. So closely was it woven that it was completely waterproof. In another passage he marvels at the skill of a bird whose only tool was its beak. In general his description derives from Aristotle (or his source) though he adds the disarming information that everyone has seen halcyons' nests, including himself, who had seen and touched them on numerous occasions![3] Like Aristotle he was obviously referring to some familiar marine phenomenon. Aelian's[4] description is also based on Aristotle.

As if these flights of fancy were not sufficient the bird was said to breed during the 'Halcyon Days', a period of winter calm. 'The halcyon breeds during the winter solstice, so when the season is calm the seven days preceding the solstice are called "Halcyon Days", together with the seven days following. As Simonides, the poet, sang "Whenever during the winter season Zeus brings a fortnight of calm, mortal men term the season windless, sacred to the brooding of the painted halcyon". The days are calm when the winds change to be

southerly at the solstice, after blowing from the north at the season of the Pleiads. It is said that within seven days the halcyon makes its nest, while during the remaining seven it lays and rears its young. But in these regions it doesn't always happen that Halcyon Days occur, whilst in the Sicilian sea they are almost invariable. Of all birds the halcyon is most rarely seen. It is seen only about the season when the Pleiads set and the winter solstice. It will flit around a ship at anchor in the roads only immediately to disappear.'[5]

In marked contrast to his fictional account of the nest Aristotle's[6] description of the bird is perfectly specific. 'The halcyon is not much larger than a sparrow. Its colour is blue-green and inclined to red. The entire body, wings and in particular the neck parts are a blend of such colours, though none are distinctly defined. Its beak is yellowish, long and thin. So much for its appearance.' Earlier he says 'The halcyon species lives by the water and includes two varieties. One perches in the reeds and sings, while the other, which is the larger bird, is silent. Both have blue backs . . .'[7] The halcyon, as well as a variety known as the *kerylos*, also frequents the sea-shore.[8] Both the halcyon and *kerylos* are mentioned by the lyric poet Alcman[9] (seventh century BC) 'Would that I might be a *kerylos*, and flit over the bright wave-crest, in company with the halcyons, spring bird of the purple sea.' Aristophanes[10] echoes these lines in the *Birds*. 'You with the halcyons flitting delightedly over the surge of the infinite sea.' He also describes the *kerylos* as 'the lady halcyon's mate',[11] while Aelian[12] says the halcyons carried the *kerylos*, when aged, on their backs! Clearly the Ancients distinguished the two birds, but the distinction is now lost.

Homer[13] refers to the halcyon's song in a digression in *Iliad*, IX, about Meleager. He mentions the hero's wife Cleopatra, surnamed Alcyone, 'because her mother wept with the cry of the plaintive halcyon', when Apollo snatched her away. Further references are found in the poets.[14]

There seems little doubt from Aristotle's description that the bird he had in mind was the European kingfisher (*alcedo ispida*) which is not mentioned under any other Greek name. He has got the size roughly right and the iridescent hues, though the bill is black and orange rather than yellowish. It also, of course, lives near water, frequents the sea-shore and migrates in winter to warmer climes. It is in winter that it is seen in Greece and presumably the myth of its winter nesting was connected with this, since no Greek could have seen its nest in reality. It also frequents reed-beds and feeds on fish and flies so

rapidly that its wings seem to blur, which may be the significance of Ibycus'[15] epithet 'broad-winged'. Though few seem to realize it the kingfisher has a trilling, whistling song,[16] so there is no myth in that. It also lays rather more eggs than Aristotle[17] gave it credit for, but information about the kingfisher was naturally hard to come by.

For myths of Alcyone and Ceyx see chap. XIX; celestial affinities see chap. XII.

STYMPHALIAN BIRDS (STYMPHALIDES)

The fifth Labour of Heracles was to shoot or scare away the man-killing birds associated with Lake Stymphalus (pl. 15) in northern Arcadia. The fullest account of this mysterious exploit is given by Pausanias.[18] 'There is a story about the waters of Stymphalus that man-eating birds once bred there, which Heracles is said to have shot with his arrows. But Pisander of Camirus [epic poet of seventh or sixth century BC] denies that the hero slew the birds, but rather frightened them away with the din of rattles. The Arabian desert produces many other creatures, including birds known as Stymphalian, that are no whit less fierce where men are concerned than lions and leopards. These fly at those who come to hunt them, wound them with their beaks and kill them. All bronze or iron armour is pierced by the birds. But if the hunters wear thick garments of plaited cork the beaks of the Stymphalian birds are caught in the cork, just as the wings of little birds are held by bird-lime. These fowl are the size of a crane, and resemble ibises, but their beaks are stouter, and not curved like those of ibises. Whether the Arabian birds of today, the namesakes of the Arcadian birds of yore, are also of the same species, I do not know. If Stymphalian birds have been known from the beginning, along with falcons and eagles, these birds possess an Arabian origin in my view, and a flock of them might have flown sometime to Stymphalos in Arcadia. Probably the Arabs called them by some other name originally, and not "Stymphalian". But the reputation of Heracles and the superiority of the Greek over the barbarian has resulted in the birds of the Arabian desert being called Stymphalian in modern times.'

The historian Diodorus[19] (first century BC) adds the interesting information that 'an innumerable flock of birds were ruining the crops in the surrounding country'. There is nothing in the main account incompatible with a rational explanation, though later the story, like the hunting of the Calydonian Boar, acquired an accretion of myth. At some unknown date in the remote past a flock of crane-like birds, of

unknown species, visited the Stymphalian Lake. There they became unpopular, either because they attacked the crops, as in Diodorus' account, or for some other reason. Most authorities are agreed that the birds were water-fowl, though Apollodorus[20] recorded the extraordinary version that the birds took refuge in the surrounding forests from wolves! Miss Benton[21] has made the interesting suggestion that they were great crested grebes (*podiceps cristatus*) which have strong straight bills and somewhat sinister looking ear-flaps, resembling Thracian helmets, which could have given them a quite undeserved reputation for fierceness. Nevertheless Athenian artists, as she observes, identified them with the water-fowl most familiar to them, *viz* geese or swans. The appearance of unfamiliar birds of martial appearance during a season of plague or famine might easily have excited the animosity of the local inhabitants. Lake Stymphalus is a shallow lake, and another possibility could be flamingoes, whose bizarre appearance in similar circumstances might have produced a like reaction. To speculate further would be idle, and it is possible that the Stymphalian birds were not real birds at all.

For their connection with Heracles and the Argonauts see chap. XXI; as Sirens see chap. XXII.

PHOENIX

The phoenix (whose name is apparently derived from the Egyptian *bjn* which signified either a mythical bird or a palm-tree)[22] was first mentioned by Hesiod,[23] who, after stating that the crow outlived nine generations of men, the stag four generations of the crow and the raven three stags, adds 'But the Phoenix outlives nine generations of ravens.' It is curious, however, that the myth of the phoenix then remains ignored by literature prior to Herodotus[24] who gives the fullest account.

'They [i.e. the Egyptians] have also another sacred bird called the Phoenix, which I myself have never seen except in pictures. In fact it is a great rarity, even in Egypt, only coming there (according to the accounts of the people of Hieropolis) once in 500 years, when the old phoenix dies. Its size and appearance, if it is like the pictures, are as follows. The plumage is partly red, partly golden, while the general shape and size are almost exactly that of the eagle. They tell a story of what this bird does, which does not seem to be credible, that he comes all the way from Arabia, and brings the parent bird, all plastered over with myrrh, to the temple of the Sun, and there buries the body. In

order to bring him, they say, he first forms a ball of myrrh as big as he finds he can carry; then he hollows out the ball, and puts his parent inside, after which he covers over the opening with fresh myrrh, and the ball is then of exactly the same weight as at first; so he brings it to Egypt, plastered over as I have said, and deposits it in the temple of the Sun. Such is the story they tell of the doings of this bird.' Dionysius[25] preserves the more familiar account.

'I have heard that among the Indians there is a bird which is conceived without parents or union called the Phoenix. They say that it lives for a very long time and entirely without fear since men do not attempt to attack it with arrows, stones, rods or traps. Its death is equivalent to its rebirth. For if, when it grows old, it sees that its powers of flight are declining or the keenness of its sight growing dim, it collects a pile of litter on a high cliff and builds a funeral pyre which is also a nest of life. Then as the Phoenix sits on it the warmth of the sun's rays sets it alight. After its destruction in this fashion another young Phoenix is born from the ashes and follows the same ancestral custom, so that this bird comes into existence solely through the action of the sun's rays without either father or mother.'

Aelian[26] gives a more mystical account. 'Phoenixes know how to reckon 500 years without computing, for they are pupils of nature, the All Wise, and for this reason they have no need of fingers or anything else to assist their knowledge of figures. The reason for their knowledge and the necessity behind it are well known. For very few Egyptians know when the 500 year period is complete. Only a few are in the secret and they are priests. On these subjects the latter experience difficulty in reaching agreement and twit one another that it was not now but at some time later than when it was due that the divine bird would appear. In the middle of their vain arguments the bird miraculously computes the time by signs and puts in an appearance. The priests are then obliged to acknowledge that though they talk the sun to sleep they know less than the birds.'

The philosopher Philostratus[27] believed that the phoenix returned to India in the intervals of its absence from Egypt, and that it sang its own funeral dirge like the swan. Whether the phoenix was a real bird is doubtful, though Tacitus'[28] circumstantial account of the bird's appearance in AD 34 seems to suggest that some rare eagle-like bird was viewed. Meinertzhagen's[29] guess was that it was a lammergeyer, for the bird inhabits the deserts of Sinai and could wander. The lammergeyer is, of course, of exceedingly impressive appearance and coloured

gold and rusty. Since it normally soars above the line of vision it is rarely seen.

For the phoenix as a medicinal bird see chap. XIV.

BIRDS OF DIOMEDES (DIOMEDEIOI ORNITHES)

Both Strabo[30] and Aelian[31] were familiar with an island or islands off Apulia (eastern Italy) inhabited by sea fowl. They were associated in legend with the famous Greek hero Diomedes and his comrades, who were said to have been transformed into birds (see chap. XIX). Aristotle[32] describes the birds as 'large in size with big strong bills'. Aelian[33] confused them with herons, but Pliny[34] makes the pertinent remark that they 'excavated burrows with their beaks'. Since shearwaters alone of Mediterranean sea-birds, apart from the little storm petrel, excavate burrows for their nests there seems to be little doubt that the fabled Birds of Diomedes belonged to this species. They are almost certainly to be identified with Cory's shearwater (*procellaria diomedea*) which nests in colonies on the Mediterranean islands and whose presence has been described on the Strophades in modern times.[35]

Since shearwaters are partially nocturnal during the breeding season, this, coupled with their eerie cries, became a fruitful source of myth. Shearwaters are said to dive with outspread wings and to shake off the water when they emerge which could have given rise to the legend that they sprinkled the hero's temple and tomb.[36] Arrian[37] says the same of the temple of Achilles. Their presence on the Strophades suggests that they may have contributed to the Harpy myth (see chap. XXI).

For legends connected with these birds see chap. XIX.

BIRDS OF MEMNON (MEMNONIDES)

Aelian[38] describes these birds as paying annual visits to the tomb of the hero Memnon, son of the dawn goddess, who was slain by Achilles at Troy, and 'separating and parting in emnity and discord and fighting fierce battles.'

According to Pausanias[39] 'the inhabitants of the Hellespont say they [i.e. the birds] go to Memnon's tomb and sweep clean all that is bare of trees or grass and sprinkle it with their wings wetted with the waters of the Aesopus.' In other words the inhabitants of the Hellespont were familiar with a species of bird which arrived on migration and engaged in mutual battles. The bird referred to is thought to be the ruff (*philomachus pugnax*) which in its breeding plumage of coloured frill and

head tufts is a most conspicuous member of the sandpiper family, and engages in mock battles with its rivals. Though the ruff does not breed nowadays as far south as the Hellespont it is probable that the males would begin to display during their spring journey north.

For the legend see chap. XIX.

CINNAMON BIRD (KINNAMOMON ORNEON)

The mystery of the origin of cinnamon, which was much prized by the Egyptians, gave rise to the extraordinary story that it was obtained from the nest of the cinnamon bird. 'Still more wonderful', says Herodotus,[40] 'is the mode in which they collect the cinnamon. Where the wood grows, and what country produces it, they cannot tell – only some following probability, relate that it comes from the country in which Bacchus was brought up. Great birds, they say, bring the sticks which we Greeks, taking the word from the Phoenicians, call cinnamon, and carry them up into the air to make their nests. These are fastened with a sort of mud to a sheer face of rock, where no foot of man is able to climb. So the Arabians, to get the cinnamon, use the following artifice. They cut all the oxen and asses and beasts of burden that die in their land into large pieces, which they carry with them into those regions, and place near the nests; which not being able to support the weight, break off and fall to the ground. Hereupon the Arabians return and collect the cinnamon, which is afterwards carried from Arabia into other countries.'

Aristotle[41] had also heard of the bird. 'Those who live in those parts say that there is such a thing as a cinnamon bird and that it brings the so-called cinnamon from some mysterious spot and makes its nest out of it. It nests among the top branches of high trees. But the inhabitants tip their arrows with lead and shoot them down and in this fashion collect the cinnamon from among the debris.'

The cinnamon bird is perhaps incapable of identification, though mud nests attached to a steep rock face suggest the crag martin (*ptyonoprogne rupestris*) which is common in Egypt, its nest inaccessible and so a suitable candidate for myth.

CIRIS (KIRIS)

The fabulous ciris, into which Scylla was transformed and pursued by Nisus in the form of a sea-eagle, was described by the Latin poets. In the pseudo-Virgilian *ciris*[42] it is described as white, yet with the iridescence and coral feet of a rock dove, and furnished with a purple

crest. Sea-eagles, of course, hunt rock doves, but also terns, some of which, like the common tern, have red feet or even crests, like the sandwich tern (*sterna sandviciensis*). Nevertheless it must be conceded that the descriptions are imaginative and impossible to identify on the evidence available. The ciris is only briefly referred to in later Greek literature, e.g. by Dionysius[43] who comments 'If the sea-eagle sees it wandering it immediately swoops and kills it'. The lexicographers, on the other hand, defined it as a 'bird' or 'a kind of falcon'.[44]

For the myth of Nisus and Scylla see chap. XIX.

CHAPTER XI

BIRDS AS FOOD AND SPORT

The Greeks were omnivorous where birds were concerned. Ducks, coots, geese, pigeons, thrushes, blackbirds, larks, jays, swans, pelicans, wagtails, cranes and even cuckoos, owls and nightingales were included on the menu.[1] Indeed most birds were regarded as edible and were knocked down by stones or trapped by various cunning devices. 'And they pelt you like lunatics,' Peisthetaerus[2] reminds the birds, 'and even in the temples every fowler sets his nooses, springes, rods, nets, toils, snares and cages.'

Favourite methods of trapping birds were with limed rods or nets, laid among bushes or other suitable places where birds roosted, or by setting gins. Two methods of trapping blackbirds are described by Dionysius.[3] In the first a ring net made of twisted flax was set among thick bushes with a rod coated with bird-lime in the centre. When the birds flew in they were held fast by the bird-lime (obtained from mistletoe) while their escape was prevented by tightly stretched strings. The second method was employed in winter when the birds were hungry. A pit was filled with berries and two pieces of potsherd were suspended on a peg. When the bird touched the peg the sherds collapsed and imprisoned it.

Larks and other small birds were caught by a similar method in summer, when water was substituted for food. 'You will not capture the calandra lark easily', Dionysius[4] warns, 'unless you set the net by water. For the lark flies up eager to drink. Meantime the fowler by keeping out of sight and extending the net will trap the lark while it is drinking.' Another method of taking larks and smaller birds was to employ an owl as a decoy. The latter was held by a cord while 'rods coated with bird-lime were set round about and the larks which came to mob it were trapped.'[5]

Migrating doves were also caught with bird-lime,[6] or, in winter, by coating the branches on which they roosted.[7] Birds were also taken by night in nets while sleeping.[8] Sometimes hawks were placed nearby to terrify the birds and force them to take cover.[9] Disguise was also practised. According to Dionysius[10] fowlers actually went to the length of disguising themselves as stags in order to approach partridges.

Partridges themselves were favourite decoys since their challenge enticed wild birds to enter the nets. Both males and females were employed. 'The challenge of the decoy partridge is answered by the leader of the wild birds which thrusts its way in. Once the leader is taken in the nets a second partridge attacks in turn with a similar call. This is what happens if the decoy-bird is a male. But if it is a female, and if the leader of the wild birds answers her call, the other males mob him and drive him away from the female because they see him making advances to her instead of to them. For this reason it often makes its approach in silence to prevent another male hearing his call and coming and attacking him. Indeed experienced fowlers claim that the male when he approaches the female makes her keep quiet, lest he be obliged to give battle to other males which may have heard him.' So Aristotle.[11]

As for quails they were normally caught during the period of migration by spreading nets along the sea-shore.[12] Alternatively a coat was suspended as a kind of scarecrow to divert their attention while they were driven.[13] According to Clearchus[14] mirrors were set up in the runs with nooses before them, so that the birds attacked their reflection and were caught. The same authority would have us believe that jackdaws were lured by a similar ruse. When they saw their reflections in a bowl of oil they fell in, became 'oiled' and were easily caught.[15]

Pigeons were also used as decoys and cruelly blinded to prevent them flying away.[16] That fowlers remained as untroubled in conscience as modern anglers is clear from Dionysius'[17] statement that fowling was a far more delightful pastime than sea-fishing or hunting wild beasts since it not only involved no personal danger but its charm was considerably enhanced by the sweet singing of the bird victims! Oppian[18] takes a similar view.

'See how delightful is the fowler's toil. No swords, sickles or brazen spears are borne against the quarry. Instead their weapons are cunning strings, sweet and sticky bird-lime and reeds which tread an airy path.' Later he describes how the fowler's prey is easy and visible, 'for some birds he takes secretly while sleeping in their nests, others he steals with limed rods, while still others fall of their own accord into the long-plaited net, and while seeking rest light on a joyless perch.'

Large birds like cranes were said to be caught by excavating a gourd, baiting it with a beetle and coating it with lime. The captured bird's cries attracted other cranes, which were trapped either by this method

or by a more elaborate method employing a bean.[19] It seems, however, doubtful whether a bird of the size and strength of a crane could have been so easily taken. According both to Virgil[20] and Antipater[21] the more usual method of taking cranes was to employ nooses to fetter or strangle them.

Corn was scattered on river banks with a wooden decoy to attract wild geese. The geese would attack the decoy, which was attached to a string and which the fowler manipulated from a hidden retreat until the birds walked over the nooses.[22] Water-fowl, like grebes, were hunted at night from a boat furnished with a lantern. The birds were fascinated by the light (which they took for a star!) and were then easily netted.[23]

Arabian ostriches, according to Xenophon,[24] could outdistance horses, through their speed of foot and habit of using their wings like sails. They could, however, be outwitted as Aelian[25] describes. 'It [i.e. the ostrich] is caught by means of horses. For it runs in a circle, keeping to the circumference. But the horsemen cut it off by keeping on the inner edge, and by circling less finally overtake it when it is exhausted with running.' As so often Aelian[26] appends an ingenious alternative according to which the hunter surrounded the ostrich's nest with spears. The bird on returning attempts to leap over the barrier and is consequently impaled! The flesh was favoured by Persian kings.

Bustards, on the other hand, were easily run down if coursed on horse-back with hounds, since they tired quickly like partridges. Their flesh, according to Xenophon,[27] was very sweet. Certainly it was highly prized in Britain up to the time of its disappearance in the early nineteenth century.

Both the scops and long-eared owls were excellent mimics and could be captured by an accomplice creeping up behind while imitating the antics of the fowler.[28] A like tale was told of the purple gallinule,[29] which, however, was kept for ornamental purposes and not for eating. Even more absurd was the reputed capture of nightjars[30] by doctoring the teats of the nannies which they were said to milk, or causing terns[31] to break their necks by persuading them to dive at fish painted on boards.

The battery-hen system of keeping birds was well known to the Ancients, who adopted even crueller methods. Cranes and swans, according to Plutarch,[32] had their eyes sewn up, were kept in the dark and fattened for the table. The flesh was served with spices to make it more appetizing. Geese[33] too were fattened and elaborately dressed.

As for small birds, after they had been trapped and killed they were either piled up in heaps in the bird market for the would-be purchaser's inspection, hung up on strings, blown up to make them appear fatter or displayed on stalls with feathers in their nostrils, probably to attract attention.[34] Finally when the purchaser had made his selection (finches sold at seven a penny) he took them home and roasted them for dinner. But since birds were regarded as inferior eating, some, like starlings, markedly so, the flavour was improved by a lavish use of condiments like cheese and silphium and a brew of sweet, thick gravy.[35] In later times they were brought to table elaborately dressed, after being artificially fattened.

Athenaeus[36] discusses the merits of the various table-birds, including the pheasant. 'I will away to the market', says one of his characters, 'and buy a pheasant to eat with you.' Later he quotes the proverb 'Birds' milk is rarer or a well plucked pheasant',[37] which suggests that the latter was regarded as a feast for the connoisseur. As for the francolin[38] it 'provides the sweetest flesh to cook at the victory feast'. Swans[39] too, he says, 'were not often absent at our banquet.'

The eggs of swans and geese and even ostriches were eaten (the latter by oriental monarchs) though Aelian criticizes the use of swans' eggs for food since the bird was sacred to Apollo. However the Greeks do not appear to have been deterred by religious scruples from eating either the eggs of sacred birds or the birds themselves.

Certain birds were bred for sport, and notably fighting cocks. The fighting cock is first referred to by Aeschylus[40] in the *Eumenides*. In that play Athena sternly charges the Furies never to inspire her people with the spirit of civil war 'dragging, as it were, the heart out of fighting cocks', but rather to fight with foreign foes. With 'cocks battling within the house', she will have nothing to do. Cock-fights took place on a raised table called a *telia*[41] and were rubbed with garlic[42] when disabled in order to help them revive. We are told that Themistocles instituted an annual cock-fight at Athens to remind the citizens of their victory over the Persians. The contests, according to Aelian,[43] were confined to a single day and the point of the festival was to demonstrate how cocks were prepared to fight to the death rather than face defeat, even without the excuse of patriotism. Lucian,[44] in fact, discovered a moral purpose in cock-fighting since it taught men not to appear 'less noble or valiant than cocks and not to give in through wounds, weakness or other mischances.' A representation of the annual cock-fight at Athens was carved on the high priest's marble

throne in the theatre of Dionysus.[45] A defeated cock, according to Aelian,[46] refused to crow, 'for its self-esteem had suffered a shock, and it was overwhelmed with shame'. Aristophanes[47] says it was called a 'slave'. The victor, on the other hand, 'boasted, showed off and behaved like one exulting',[48] in fact like Aegisthus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.[49] 'Boldly boast', the chorus rejoins sarcastically 'like a cock beside his hen'. Fighting cocks were fitted with spurs. Aristophanes[50] refers to the custom in the *Birds*, as well as drawing attention to the cock's pugnacity and bullying character.

Partridges were also kept in cages for fighting. Aelian[51] says the Egyptians set its mate beside each cock in order to stimulate them to fight 'for a partridge which has been conquered never dares to appear within sight of its mate'. He appends the absurd information that Phocian partridges were cowards and deliberately starved themselves to render themselves unfit for food, while fighting birds yielded in order to avoid being killed!

Quails too were kept for fighting, as Plato[52] mentions. Shakespeare[53] refers to the custom in *Antony and Cleopatra*, 'and his quails ever beat mine, inhoop'd at odds.' Equally popular was the curious sport of quail tapping. A quail was put in a ring and tapped on the head to test its courage, or alternatively its crest was pulled. If it stood its ground the tapper won. If it played the coward and ran out of the ring he lost his bet. Aristophanes[54] mentions a certain Meidias who bred quails specifically for this purpose and had a dazed expression like a hard filliped quail. Addiction to the sport was known as 'Quail Madness'[55] and was regarded, like gambling, as a mark of the profligate.

Hawking was known, but not much practised in Greece. Aristotle[56] makes two references to the sport in Thrace. The falconers were men or boys who when they reached a suitable place among the marshes summoned the hawks by name. When the hawks heard the falconers' voices they swooped on the quarry, which took refuge in the nearest bushes. There they were knocked down by sticks and captured. But the most remarkable feature, the philosopher observes, was that the hawks laid the catch by the falconers' feet and they shared it with them. Though the details are vague, e.g. there is no mention of the methods used by the boys to train the hawks or how they carried them, the general picture of rewards for the hawks' efforts suggests that the Thracians had mastered in great measure the art of falconry. Falconry was practised by the Persians according to the court doctor Ctesias.[57] He mentions eagles, which were certainly employed in the east, but

also less credibly ravens, kites and crows. Pliny[58] also mentions ravens in connection with a certain Crates Monceros who 'hunted [in Asia] with the assistance of ravens to such a degree that he carried them into the forest perched on the crest of his helmet or on his shoulders. They would track down and drive the game, pursuing the practice to a point where even wild ravens followed him when he came out.' Ravens, of course, would be completely useless in falconry and have never been so employed. Either the birds were not ravens (wild ravens do not inhabit woods) or Crates had discovered that the presence of tame corvids startled the quarry and rendered them easier to capture.

Probably the pastime of birdnesting[59] was as popular with the ancient Greeks as with modern small boys. At any rate the representation on a cup of a man in a forest with a bird flying past to its nest in a tree has been so interpreted.

CHAPTER XII

BIRDS AND NATURAL PHENOMENA

In ancient times when the succession of the seasons was closely associated with natural phenomena the behaviour of birds was closely observed. Their arrival or departure on migration in spring or autumn followed an almost clock-like regularity, which did not vary appreciably from year to year. Hence the chorus' boast in Aristophanes' *Birds*.[1]

'First we show the seasons, of spring, winter and autumn. To sow when the crane trumpets migrating to Libya. Then he bids the captain hang up his rudder and sleep . . . The kite again appears later on and reveals another season, when it is time to shear the spring fleece from the sheep. Next comes the swallow, when it is time to sell your cloak and buy a summer garment.'

Also the belief that birds reacted in various ways to changes in the weather was widespread. Every countryman knows that when the cuckoo's note is heard spring has arrived, and that when swallows fly low over water a storm is on the way. So did the Greeks. The cuckoo is 'first to bring us news of spring', said Dionysius.[2] When 'swallows dart round the mere with their breasts continually brushing the wrinkled surface', it is a sign of rain Aratus[3] observed. The weather in Greece is, of course, more generally predictable than in more northern lands. Nevertheless sudden and severe storms frequently interrupt the summer drought and of these the birds give warning. Some ancient authorities, and notably Homer, ignored birds as pointers to seasonal changes, or in their humbler capacity as weather prophets. Even in the *Odyssey* where birds might have been reasonably expected to provide the wandering hero with salutary storm warnings the poet preferred to delegate such matters to the gods. Hesiod,[4] on the other hand, proffered practical advice to farmers and knew that birds were reliable guides both to the weather and seasons. 'When the cuckoo sings cuckoo among the oak-leaves and first brings joy to mortals over the boundless earth, and Zeus rains on the third day and does not stop until more or not much less than the depth of an ox-hoof has fallen, then the man who ploughs late will catch up with the man who ploughs early.'

Again in November the cry of migrating cranes did not pass unnoticed in an agricultural society. 'Mark it well when you hear the voice of the crane calling yearly high up in the clouds. It brings the signal to plough and heralds the season of rainy winter.'[5] Half a millenium later Aratus,[6] the Hellenistic court poet, still associates the crane with the plough.

'The seasonable ploughman rejoices at the seasonable arrival of flocks of cranes; the unseasonable likewise. For ever so the winters follow the cranes. The winters are early when they arrive early in flocks. But when they appear late and not in flocks, but take a longer time to travel in small troops, the later work benefits from winter's delay.'

Theophrastus[7] again associates winter with the cranes. 'If they fly early and in flocks winter will be early. But if they linger long winter will be late', a reasonable assumption since cranes, like most migrants, only forsook their summer haunts when the weather turned cold and the earlier the winter in northern latitudes the earlier the flocks would move south. Aelian[8] says that the cries of cranes 'summoned storms', though in fact they were careful to choose settled weather for their annual migrations. Sailors were quick to return to harbour if they noticed a flock flying back, realizing the futility of struggling against contrary winds that even the cranes could not master.[9] Cranes were, however, unlikely to be caught unawares, except in the event of a local storm. Then 'long lines of cranes overhead do not head out on their travels but wheel about and return again.'[10] For, as Theophrastus[11] correctly observed, 'when cranes fly off and do not return it is a sign of fine weather. For they do not fly until they see that the weather is clear for flight.' Aratus[12] agrees. 'Cranes also before a gentle calm steadily pursue one direction all together, and when the weather is fine will not be carried in disordered flight.'

But cranes were by no means the only weather prophets. The various members of the crow family were also credited with prognostic powers. 'It is true', Aratus[13] avers, 'that the tribes of ravens and daws are signs from Zeus of coming rain, when they appear in flocks and shriek or, after uttering two bass croaks, rustle their feathers and shake them without ceasing.'

'When the raven croaks quickly and continually,' says Aristotle,[14] 'while flapping its wings and clapping them, it means that he is the first to sense that a storm is brewing. If the raven, crow or daw call during fine weather they indicate the arrival of a storm.'

Theophrastus'[15] account is much the same, though rather more detailed. 'The raven is accustomed to vary its note. If one of them croaks twice and rustles and shakes its feathers it is a sign of rain, both if it changes its note rapidly while rain is about and when it is delousing itself on an olive-tree; and if during fine or rainy weather it imitates water dripping it is a sign of rain. If ravens and daws fly up and shriek it is a sign of rain.'

Elsewhere he states that the mere habit of delousing foretold rain. 'When hens and cocks delouse themselves it is a sign of rain and when they imitate the sound of water, as if it were raining.'[16] Aristotle[17] also claims that 'when jackdaws shriek and fly up and down [or 'shriek like hawks', Aratus][18] it is a sign of cold and rain.' It is, of course, a familiar habit of jackdaws to toss about chirping excitedly in windy weather, usually, at least in Britain, in the company of rooks. On the other hand the harsh croak of the raven rarely, if ever, varies, neither do the calls of the various corvids with which it could be confused. It is curious too that Theophrastus makes the raven a rain prophet even when it is raining, presumably a sign of protracted bad weather.

The raven's croak could also forecast fine weather, according to Aratus.[19] 'When ravens singly give two lonely croaks followed by rapid calls and flock in greater numbers when they think of roosting, in full voice.' But ravens rarely flock, except round a carcase, and the description more nearly suits the rook.

The crow, like the raven, was also a prophet of rain, as Theophrastus[20] reminds us. 'If it caws twice or thrice and late in the day, it is a sign of stormy weather.' Aratus[21] says much the same of the crow 'softly varying its voice at eventide' or when 'by the jutting headland the cawing crow struts on dry land before the coming storm',[22] a passage imitated by Virgil.[23] Even fig-leaves,[24] if shaped like crows' feet, were said to forecast a bad summer.

Like its congener the raven the crow could also be a sign of fine weather. 'If the crow caws thrice at dawn it signifies good weather, or if it calls softly during a winter evening.'[25]

Even the humble sparrow was a weather sign. 'If the sparrow chirps at dawn it is a sign of rain.'[26] A white sparrow (presumably because it was a rarity) was a sign of a big storm. So Theophrastus.[27] Again 'If a tame duck creeps under the eave and claps its wings it is a sign of rain, likewise daws and cocks, if they clap their wings by the mere or sea like the duck it is a sign of rain.'[28] Aelian[29] also states that 'ducks flapping their wings forecast a strong gale.'

The heron forecast rain if it cried or flew out to sea or even if it flew in from the sea. 'When the heron flies wildly to land', says Aratus[30] 'from the sea and cries rapidly it is the precursor of a storm at sea.' Geese too when they 'hurry to their food with loud cackles are a sure sign of a storm',[31] so was 'the chaffinch greeting the dawn and birds of every kind flying in from the sea, including the wren or robin hiding in hollow niches.'[32]

Theophrastus[33] makes a similar observation about geese. 'When geese cackle a lot or fight round their food it is a sign that a storm is brewing.' Owls, on the other hand 'gently hooting at night'[34] were a sign of fine weather, perhaps the ubiquitous note of the little owl.[35]

Sea-birds were naturally regarded as good weather guides. When a storm is in the offing 'Often both freshwater and sea-birds dive incessantly and plunge into the water'[36] or when 'storm petrels flit about in fine weather they are flocking before the coming storm.'[37] On the other hand, and illogically, petrels (if *kepphoi* refers to the petrel and there is no proof that it did) were generally regarded as bringing good luck to sailors.[38] 'Divers and ducks, both wild and tame, are a sign of rain when they dive, of wind when they flap their wings.'[39] The flapping of wings was a perennial sign of rain, as has been seen in the case of ravens, daws, ducks and cocks, while Aratus[40] also mentions 'Sea-wheeling shearwaters flapping their wings ashore.'

Certain of the examples quoted, e.g. uttering a cry which sounded like water dripping, ducks taking cover or wrens and robins creeping into holes, are based on a kind of primitive logic. So 'when birds which do not live in the water wash themselves it is a sign of rain or storms.'[41] Again as when rats desert a ship it is a sure sign of disaster so 'when daws forsake the islands' (where they doubtless raided the fields) 'it is a sign to farmers of famine and bad harvests.'[42] The call of the hoopoe,[43] on the other hand, if repeated frequently before the fruit was ripe was a sign of a good grape harvest.

The association of seasons with the appearance of certain birds, or alternately between bird behaviour and the weather has been thought to have led to the belief that birds actually brought the seasons and were directly responsible for weather changes. It is true that the Greeks greeted the arrival of the swallow with pleasure, showed deference to the kite and sang songs in honour of both the swallow and the crow.

'The swallow's come, the swallow's come, bringing fair weather, fair seasons',[44] chanted a chorus of small boys in the island of Rhodes. But it would be idle to conclude from an exercise which was every bit

as mercenary as the activities of carol singers that the average Greek ever supposed that swallows brought the spring. It is true that Aelian,[45] in the passage already referred to, claimed that cranes 'summoned storms'. But presumably the author was speaking metaphorically and not in any deeper sense.

There is little evidence that birds were regarded as representing celestial phenomena except under eastern, and mainly Egyptian influence, in post-classical times. A unique description in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Maidens*[46] (if the reading be correct) to the sun as the 'bird of Zeus' has been considered a deliberate barbarism in a play in which Egyptians are held up to contempt.[47] Apart from this the only other reference to the eagle and the sun occurs in Pausanias,[48] who describes it as sacred to Helios. However the constellation Aquila is often mentioned.

'The Eagle [i.e. Aquila] flies in mid-heaven,' sang the chorus in Euripides' *Rhesus*,[49] while Aratus[50] (whose Phaenomena is concerned with Astronomy as well as weather signs) describes how hard by the constellations Sagittarius and Cygnus 'another bird rides the storm, inferior in size but soaring fiercely from the sea at night's departure. Men call it the Eagle.' Aquila set, appropriately enough, at Leo's approach. Aratus makes grand mythological play with his celestial characters so that it is possible to regard the fabled hostility of the eagle to the hare, swan, bull and snake, all of which possess celestial counterparts, as in some sense representative of their relative positions in the sky. On the other hand the eagle[51] was also said to be hostile to a long list of birds and beasts, including the eel and octopus which possessed no celestial affinities. Aristotle's[52] explanation of such traditional enmities are far removed from the mystical or allegorical and based on sober scientific observations.

The raven also appeared among the constellations. Within the ram and the bull are the 'dim Cup and Raven – But it is robbed of a share in the Eagle, though close to it flies the mighty messenger of Zeus.'[53] More imaginatively the raven is described as actually pecking at an adjoining constellation. 'In the midst of its coil lies the Cup and at the tip the form of the Raven appears to peck at the coil',[54] behaving for all the world like Dickens's pet raven biting the tail of his sleeping dog.

Even better known among the constellations was Cygnus, the Swan.

'For of a truth in the sky there runs a gleaming bird. Misty it is, its upper parts roughened with stars of modest size, though none are dim. Like a bird in flight in fine weather, it glides joyously the other way,

with the tip of its right wing stretching towards Cepheus' right hand, and by its left wing is hung the leaping horse.'[55]

The hawk was Apollo's sacred bird, but since he was not a sun god, at least in classical times, the hawk was not yet regarded as a solar emblem. In later times when Apollo was identified with Egyptian Horus (or Osiris) the hawk assumed a mystical connotation.[56] The myth of Circe[57] (if connected with *kirkos*-hawk or falcon) daughter of Helios, the Sun, fails to support the theory that the hawk was a solar bird since we are told that Helios' sacred bird was the eagle.

The ibis, as the Egyptian sacred bird par excellence, naturally possessed astronomical affinities through Thoth[58] – the ibis-headed deity – who was regarded as the emblem of Sirius, the Dog-star. When Hermes[59] came to be identified with Thoth the bird's mystical associations were transferred to him. It was also associated with the moon.

'And this I have heard about the Egyptian ibis,' says Aelian.[60] 'The bird is sacred to the moon. For it takes as many days to hatch its eggs as the moon goddess waxes and wanes. It never leaves Egypt [this is quite untrue, since the bird wanders as far as South Africa] and the reason is that Egypt is the wettest of all lands, while the moon is believed to be the wettest of the planets. Should anyone attempt to export it from Egypt it will starve itself to death.'

The hoopoe[61] was also regarded as a sacred bird in Egypt, its rayed crest being considered a solar emblem. Even more mystical and obscure was the myth of the phoenix. The grammarian Horapollo[62] (fourth century AD) describes the employment of the phoenix as a solar emblem both to signify the human soul and the Nile's flood.

'Wishing to signify the soul dwelling there for a long period of the Nile Flood they draw the picture of a Phoenix. The soul because of all things in the world this creature is longest lived, the Flood because the Phoenix is an emblem of the Sun, than which nothing in the world is greater.'

Since Alcyone,[63] daughter of Atlas and Pleione, was the leader of the Pleiads, it is possible, as D'Arcy Thompson[64] suggested, that the fabled 'Halcyon Days' referred to the calm period at the winter solstice when the Pleiads rose. However in Latin calendars the Halcyon Days were placed at the beginning of spring.

CHAPTER XIII

OMENS AND AUGURY

For the ancient Greeks all birds were ominous and the word 'bird' itself was synonymous with omen as Aristophanes[1] says. 'A word is a "bird", you call a sneeze a "bird", coincidence is a "bird", a sound is a "bird", a slave is a "bird", a donkey's a "bird" to be sure. It's clear that we are your prophetic Apollo.'

But it was not, as Xenophon[2] informs us, that the Greeks believed that birds themselves 'know what is good for those who consult them, but the gods reveal it through them.' The same view was still held by Porphyry[3] five hundred years later. 'But the gods, though silent, give signs and the birds divine their meaning quicker than men and so inspired give warning by whatever means they can in their capacity as heralds.'

The belief that birds were the agents of the gods' will is fundamental in Homer.[4] When Odysseus and Diomedes set out to raid the Trojan Camp 'Pallas Athena sent them a heron, on the right [i.e. from the favourable direction] by the way. But their eyes couldn't see it because the night was dark, but they heard its cry. And Odysseus rejoiced at the bird of omen and prayed to Athena.'

Here the identity of the agent is revealed by the poet and Odysseus rightly guesses that since it is favourable it must have been sent by his divine protectress.

In the last book of the *Iliad*[5] Priam prays to Zeus to send a favourable omen and the god hears his prayer. 'And straightway he sent an eagle, most ominous of birds, the dark hunter whom they also call the "black eagle". Wide as the doors with bars that fit tight in a rich man's high vaulted hall, so wide stretched its wings on either side. It swooped through the city on the right and those watching rejoiced and their hearts were cheered within their breasts.'

Zeus sends an eagle, his own sacred bird, flying from the favourable direction. Priam then knew that his mission to ransom Hector's body would meet with success.

The identity of the agent is not always made explicit. So when Ajax challenged Hector 'a bird of omen flew towards him on the right – a high-flying eagle. And the Achaean host greeted it with a shout, cheered by the bird of presage.'[6]

Though Zeus is overtly favouring the Trojan cause, and not that of Ajax and the Greeks, it would have been assumed by everyone that the omen, being an eagle, had been sent by him. After all he was playing a double game and rarely lost an opportunity of encouraging the Greeks. So when the Trojans are attempting to burn the ships Agamemnon prays to Zeus, who despatches an eagle.

'Immediately he sent an eagle, most ominous of birds, grasping a fawn in its talons, offspring of a swift hind. And it dropped the fawn by Zeus' splendid altar, where the Achaeans were wont to sacrifice to Zeus, author of all divination. They when they knew the omen had come from Zeus attacked the Trojans more furiously and turned their thoughts to the joy of war.'[7]

While the eagle was Zeus' emblem the falcon was Apollo's envoy. So when Telemachus addresses the seer Theoclymenus, wishing only that matters were different and that he was in a position to welcome him to his home 'there flew by a bird of omen on the right, a falcon, Apollo's swift messenger. And it plucked the pigeon which it held in its talons and scattered the feathers on the ground between the ship and Telemachus himself. Then Theoclymenus called him away from his friends and clasped his hand and spoke and addressed him. "Telemachus, it was not without god's intention that that bird of omen flew past on the right." '[8] Later Theoclymenus recalls this particular omen when encouraging Penelope to hope for Odysseus' return.[9] In the *Odyssey* too the divine source of an omen is sometimes implicit rather than explicit, e.g. when Telemachus takes his leave of Menelaus an omen appears in the guise of an eagle.

'And as he spoke there flew towards him on his right an eagle carrying a huge white goose in its talons, a tame one from the farmyard. The men and women followed it shouting. The bird approached them and flew away to the right before the chariot. And those who saw it rejoiced and their hearts were cheered within their breasts.'[10] Now both Telemachus and Nestor's son Pisistratus have just addressed Menelaus as 'fosterling of Zeus', and after Helen has read the omen Telemachus prays that Zeus may confirm the interpretation. But it is not stated explicitly that Zeus sent the omen. Helen's interpretation is perfectly formal.

'Just as the eagle there descended from the mountain, where it was born and reared, and snatched away the goose which was bred in the house, so shall Odysseus return home after long trials and wanderings and wreak vengeance.'[11]

Again when Penelope dreams that an eagle attacks her geese there is no suggestion that Zeus sent the dream. It emanated, she tells Odysseus, from the fabled Gates of Dreams and was probably false at that. The description of the omen is full and detailed and typical of the simple Homeric type.

'I keep twenty geese in the house who take their feed from the water-trough and it gives me pleasure to watch them. Well, a huge eagle with crooked talons came down from the mountains and broke all their necks and killed them. And they lay in heaps about the hall. But the eagle flew off into the bright sky. But I wept and wailed though it was only a dream. And about me gathered the lovely-haired Achaean women as I wept forlornly because the eagle had slain my geese. But the eagle turned back and perched on the gutter and spoke with a mortal voice and restrained my tears.

' "Be of good cheer, daughter of far-famed Icarius. This is no dream but a true vision, which is destined to be fulfilled to your advantage. The geese are the Wooers, while I who before was an eagle omen am now your husband returned, who shall bring a grim doom on all the Wooers." '[12]

Of ill omens perhaps the most striking example is that of the eagle and the snake which appears to Hector while he is attacking the wall. On this occasion the eagle appears from the wrong direction, and is worsted by its victim.

'A bird of ill-omen had appeared to them as they were hoping to cross; a high-flying eagle skirting the host on the left. It held in its talons a blood-red snake, huge, alive and still writhing. And it did not give up its eagerness for battle, but twisted back and struck its captor in the breast by the neck. The eagle in keen distress let it fall to the ground and dropped it among the throng. Then it uttered a loud scream and glided off on the breeze. The Trojans shuddered when they saw the gleaming snake lying among them, the portent of Zeus who bears the aegis.'[13]

Polydamas explains the omen. It is a warning to the Trojans not to continue the attack. For since the eagle had failed in its attempt to kill the snake and take it back to its eyrie, so, even if the Trojans succeeded in forcing their way through the gates and wall of the Achaeans, they would inevitably suffer defeat and return in disorder.

This interpretation predictably excites Hector's displeasure. 'You stand there and tell me', he thunders 'to pay heed to long-winged birds, which I entirely disregard and couldn't care less whether they

fly to the right towards the rising sun, or to the left, towards the misty darkness.'[14]

The examples quoted so far are simple and their meaning clear. Others are more complex, and can only be interpreted by a professional augur. Such is the omen of the snake and nestlings by which Calchas foretold the fall of Troy.

'Then there appeared a powerful portent. A monstrous snake with a blood-red back, which the Olympian himself had sent into the light of day, shot out from beneath the altar and darted towards the plane-tree. There on the topmost branch were a sparrow's nestlings, tiny chicks. There were eight of them in all fluttering among the leaves and the dam made a ninth, who was the mother of the chicks. Then the snake swallowed them cheeping piteously and the mother flew round bewailing her dear chicks. But it coiled up and caught her by the wing as she screamed around it. Then when it had eaten the sparrow's offspring and the sparrow herself the god who had revealed it made of it a sign. For the son of Cronus of the crooked counsel turned it into stone.'[15]

The total number of birds involved represented the years of the siege (Troy fell in the tenth year) while the snake represented the invading Greek army. The last two lines make little sense and have been regarded as a later addition.

A curious omen appears to Telemachus in the second book[16] of the *Odyssey*. After rebuking Antinous for eating him out of house and home, Telemachus prays to Zeus to grant him recompense. 'And Zeus, the far-thunderer, sent a pair of eagles in flight, flying down from a mountain top. For a time they flew as fast as the wind's blast side by side exerting their wings. But when they reached the middle of the noisy city centre they wheeled and flapped their wings quickly and gazed down on everyone's heads, and their look held doom. Then they tore one another's cheeks and round their necks with their talons and flew off to the right through the dwellings and their city.'

The augur Halitherses interprets the omen as foretelling that Odysseus is not far away, and that he will bring doom on the Suitors. But the reason for the two eagles is not clear. If they are intended to represent Odysseus and the Suitors then one might have been expected to vanquish the other. Possibly the double eagle is intensive and intended to represent slaughter on the grand scale, or possibly it suggests that the struggle will be drawn out. At any rate Eurymachus, one of the Suitors, scoffs at the interpretation. 'Many birds', he says, 'fly about

in the sun's rays, but all are not ominous.'[17] Seemingly birds were not inevitably ominous unless the situation required.

Homer was, of course, an epic poet inspired by a vision of the heroic world and consequently concerned with birds only in so far as they enhanced that vision. Since the business of warriors was mainly with war and death the activities of their avian counterparts, eagles, vultures and hawks or falcons were inevitably most keenly observed. Such conspicuous and highly ominous birds were distinguished as *oionoi* (perhaps because they flew alone) by the augurs who were themselves officially designated as *oionopoloi*[18] (bird experts) *oionistai*[19] (bird interpreters) *oionomanteis*[20] (bird diviners) or *oionoskopoi*[21] (bird watchers), though only the first two titles are employed by Homer.

Divination, according to Cicero,[22] was either a matter of technique or of genius. 'For there are two kinds of divination, of which the one is a matter of art, the other of nature.' The Homeric augurs fell into the latter category and the Roman augurs into the former. An *oionopolos* like Calchas[23] was a witch doctor 'who knew the present, the future and the past', and as such was an important political figure. Hence the relationship between the Homeric chieftain and his augur was of a peculiarly intimate nature. The augur's chief function was to advise the chieftain when events occurred which he could not control, such as a plague or similar disaster, and on such fell occasions the chieftain was largely at the mercy of his augur.

This did not prevent the chief from abusing the augur whenever his advice displeased him. So Calchas[24] falls foul of Agamemnon, just as Polydamas[25] fell foul of Hector and Halitherses of Eurymachus[26] in the *Odyssey*. There is no reason, however, to suppose that the augur's art was not more highly regarded in cooler moments.

Anyone could be an augur if he possessed the requisite ability. So Helenus,[27] Priam's son, is described, like Calchas, as the 'best of augurs'. He overhears the conversation between Apollo and Athena at the beginning of *Iliad* Book VII[28] and advises Hector accordingly.

In the *Odyssey* the augur's art is not confined to the male sex for Helen interprets a bird omen, while mantic birds cluster about Calypso's[29] door. 'There long-winged birds have their home, owls, hawks and babbling sea-crows, whose business is connected with the sea.'

The Homeric augur decided the nature of an omen by applying the primitive maxim that anything that appeared on the right was good, while anything that appeared on the left was bad. This maxim was

not confined to the Greeks but, apart from the Romans, who regarded the left as the favourable quarter, was virtually universal. Since most people are dexterous[30] to move widershins or in an anti-clockwise direction was regarded as unlucky.[31] Hence wine is still passed from right to left, and lots were so passed in Homer.[32] But right and left are arbitrary terms, and the problem arises as to whether the augur orientated himself in relation to some fixed object or direction prior to taking an omen. Hector's[33] words to Polydamas appear to throw light on the problem.

'I couldn't care less whether they fly to the right towards the rising sun, or to the left, towards the misty darkness.'

In this passage the direction of gloom is opposed to that of dawn, which implies a contrast between west and east. The east then would represent the direction of good omen and the west of ill, and the augur would face towards the north.[34] But omens do not always appear from the same direction in Homer. When the heron cries to Odysseus'[35] right he and Diomedes were advancing towards Troy, i.e. in a southerly direction. Priam[36] again is advancing towards the north when the eagle appears to him. The conclusion seems inevitable that it was often a pure matter of chance in which direction the augur faced.

Less attention, in fact, appears to have been paid to orientation and divination from observatories than by the Romans.

An attempt to codify the laws of augury was made at Ephesus in the sixth century BC. It was, as far as we know, a unique attempt, probably of Anatolian[37] inspiration, since Greek augury was never schematized like the Roman science.[38] The fragment[39] is mutilated but has been restored to read as follows.

'Line of flight from right to left. If the bird disappeared from sight the omen is favourable; but if it raised its left wing and then soared and disappeared the omen is ill. Line of flight from left to right. If it disappeared on a straight course it is an ill omen; but if it raised its right wing and then soared and disappeared the omen is good.' Here once again 'right' is identified with 'good' and 'left' with 'ill', but 'left' may cancel right and right left if the bird happens to raise a wing.[40]

Augurs, according to Aelian,[41] were expert on the quarters of the sky in which birds appeared, as well as their cries and line of flight, whether on the left hand or on the right. There are few other references to the details of the art until the time of Michael Psellus,[42] who wrote a treatise on *Divination from Shoulder-blades and Birds* in the tenth century AD. Psellus divided Augury into four branches, *viz* bird cries, flight,

quarter or posture and activity, but these were sub-divided by authorities like Apollonius of Lacedaemon, who was said by Psellus to have made a detailed study of birds in all their aspects, including every type of posture and cry. But by this time augury had become so detailed and involved, influenced doubtless by Roman practice, that whereas a raven calling on the right was regarded as a good omen a crow was a bad one unless cawing on the left.

A recently discovered fragment of Callimachus[43] (third century BC), the Hellenistic poet and polymath, refers to the part played by augury in founding a new city. To ignore the presence of ominous birds was to invite disaster. 'The settlers drawn partly from Cyme and partly from Calchis, led by Perieres and the determined Crotaimenes landed in Sicily and founded a city without paying due regard to plundering birds!

Further references to this practice is found in the *Life of Aeschylus*[44] where the poet is said to have augured a happy life for the founders of the city of Aetna. Pausanias[45] also mentions the founding of Colonides in Messenia guided by a crested lark, while ravens, according to a tradition preserved by the lexicographer Photius[46] guided the Boeotians to the site of a new city.

Homer's omens are dramatic and contrived. They are not, however, to be dismissed on that count since they belonged to the ancient bardic tradition. All of them are drawn from nature. Most of them are convincing and indeed could be observed in Greece today.

The only bird omens mentioned by Hesiod[47] are concerned with the seasons or weather. But that he reverenced augury is clear from the closing words of the *Works and Days*. 'Happy is the man in this respect who knows all this and performs his tasks without giving offence to the deathless gods, distinguishing bird omens and avoiding transgressions.'

The poet was actually credited with a work on Augury, entitled *Ornithomanteia* (Divination by Birds) which has not survived, but was regarded as spurious by the poet Apollonius Rhodius.[48]

There are frequent references to birds in the post-Homeric epics, but few direct mentions of augury. There is, however, a notable passage in the *Hymn to Hermes*[49] where Apollo warns visitors to his oracle. 'Whoever shall come guided by the voice and flight of ominous birds he shall have joy of my utterance and I will not deceive him. But whoever puts his trust in bird omens that chatter idly and wishes to consult my prophetic powers against my will and to know more than the immortal gods, he, I say, shall make an idle journey.'

Earlier in the same work the god himself received confirmation that Hermes was the thief who had stolen his cattle, from a bird omen. 'And seeing a long-winged bird of omen he knew at once that the thief was the son of Zeus, son of Cronus.'[50] At the end of the *Hymn*[51] he gives power over beasts and birds of omen to his errant brother.

References to birds in the lyric poets are, for the most part, formal and stereotyped and add little or nothing to our knowledge of ancient ornithology. Alcman[52] wishes he could change places with the mythical *kerylos*, the harbinger of spring, while young girls are said to drop their spindles and cower like doves when a hawk or any eagle appears.[53] Pindar's poetry is filled with eagles; he in fact referred to himself as the 'divine bird of Zeus'[54] and his famous description of an eagle sleeping at the beginning of the first Pythian ode is so accurate and naturalistic that it seems to betray an acquaintance with the birds beyond the mere poetic.

'And Zeus' bird sleeps on his sceptre slacking his swift wing this side and that – and drowsily curves his subtle back.'[55] There are also direct references to augury, howbeit in a legendary context. Heracles prays to Zeus that Telamon may have a brave son. In reply Zeus sends a 'mighty eagle, king of birds'.[56] The hero seized on the omen and bade Telamon name his son Ai-as after *ai-etos* the eagle.

Both Pindar and Aeschylus exemplify Aristophanes' dictum by employing 'bird' generally in the sense of omen.

According to a familiar legend Aeschylus[57] died in Sicily by a curious mischance, when a lammergeyer dropped a tortoise on his bald head, mistaking it for the stone on which it was the bird's habit to drop the shell. It was, of course, characteristic of the Greeks to credit notable men with remarkable ends, but the choice of end in the case of Aeschylus strongly suggests that he was popularly associated with birds. Certainly bird imagery plays an important part in the extant plays and fragments, while, as already mentioned, according to the ancient life the 'poet' augured a prosperous life for the 'citizens' of newly founded Aetna.[58]

The famous passage in the first chorus of the *Agamemnon*[59] which describes two eagles devouring a hare is a splendid example of a complex bird omen, and includes many important features of the augur's art.

'I am authorized', sings the chorus, 'to tell of the fated victory foretold by omens on the way to royal heroes, for still from the gods persuasion breathes down, and my age is well adapted to sing of valorous deeds, how a fierce bird omen speeds to Troyland the twin-

throned Achaean commanders, the harmonious leaders, with avenging spear and hand, even the black king of birds for the kings of the ships and the one that is white-tailed, appearing hard by the hall from the quarter which brandishes the spear in a place where all could see, feeding on a hare-dam, pregnant with offspring, cheated of its final course . . . But the wise prophet to the army observing how they were two in character, recognized the devourers of the hare as the warlike sons of Atreus, the expedition leaders. And this was his prophecy. "In the course of time this expedition will capture Priam's city and before the city walls Fate shall take all the people's herds perforce." '

In the first place the omen appeared 'on the way' and in a situation 'where all could see', so that its obvious relevance to the expedition could not be ignored. Such omens belonged to the most familiar class, as is clear from the Homeric examples. Next the two eagles are sharply distinguished. The one is black and the other white-tailed. Since the black eagle is described by Aristotle as the bravest of all, the augur referred it to Agamemnon and the white-tailed to his brother Menelaus, though presumably without any derogatory significance.[60] The omen appears on the 'spear hand' i.e. the right and so is propitious, though later we are told that the portent is only auspicious from one point of view, but inauspicious from another. Pregnant females were under the protection of Artemis and the goddess later demands terrible retribution. At the same time it forecast that the Greeks would take Troy, represented by the hare.

In the *Persians* Atossa,[61] the queen mother, has a dream about her son Xerxes. 'I saw an eagle flying towards Phoebus' altar, and I stood rooted to the spot with terror, friends, for I beheld a hawk swooping behind, attacking it and tearing at its head with its talons.'

The omen is highly inauspicious, for unlike the eagle which Penelope saw in her dream striking down the geese, Atossa's eagle represents Xerxes, her son, being worsted by a much smaller bird, namely the puny Greek forces.

In the opening lines of the *Seven against Thebes* Aeschylus[62] refers in terms of approbation to the augur's art. 'But now as the shepherd of birds tells us, observing bird signs with his ears and wits, practising true science, eschewing fire, he being master of such powers of divination says that a mighty Achaean attack is being debated by night and treachery against the city.'

The reference to 'eschewing fire', i.e. refusing to employ the eastern arts of haruspicy[63] (i.e. divination by examining entrails) and such

suggests that augury was regarded as a superior science, presumably, because, at least among the Greeks, it was more traditional.

Just as a change in the notes of ravens or crows was said to forecast a change in the weather or the cry of the cuckoo or crane to herald the coming of spring so augurs were able to interpret bird sounds. Indeed famous practitioners like Melampus were enabled to understand bird language after having their ears licked by snakes.[64]

'The Arabs', says Porphyry,[65] 'understand crows' chatter and the Tyrrhenians eagles'. Perhaps we could understand all creatures if snakes had licked our ears too. The diversity and differences of these sounds clearly possess significance, when they fear, cry, summon to food, greet one another in a friendly fashion or are heard challenging one another to fight. Such is the diversity that it is difficult even for experts who have devoted their lives to such matters to distinguish between them.'

In the *Prometheus Bound*[66] the Titan includes among the benefits which he has bestowed upon mankind the invention of the augur's art. 'Wayside signs and the flight of crook-taloned birds of omen I distinguished clearly, both which are auspicious by nature and the inauspicious together with their several habitats, their mutual hatreds, affections and flockings.'

The passage is remarkable for the inclusion of technical terms connected with augury. The frequency of 'wayside signs' has already been mentioned, and also the preference in ominous contexts for raptorial birds. Birds' habitats again were of special interest to the augur (eagles descend from their habitat, the mountains,[67] in Homer) as was the hostility of e.g. falcons to doves, the affection of the lammergeyer for its offspring (mentioned both by Homer[68] and Aeschylus[69]) or one of the numerous affections listed by Aristotle, which prevented one species from attacking another.

Aeschylus[70] referred to bird emnity in the *Suppliant Maidens*, in which Danaus' daughters seek sanctuary from their Egyptian cousins 'like a flock of doves in terror of hawks of like feather, the kindred race of foes that pollute.' Earlier in the same play the maidens pray that 'some augur nearby may hear their complaint'.[71] Indeed Aeschylus' apparent knowledge of augury strongly suggests that the art was still widely practised in his own day.

Sophocles[72] also employs bird imagery and refers to the augural art. In the *Antigone* Teiresias tells Creon, 'You will know when you hear the warnings of my art. For seated at my ancient observatory, from

which I survey every quarter of the sky I heard a strange bird cry, as they screamed in dire rage and raised a barbarous din. And I knew that they were tearing one another with murderous claws. The whir of wings was all too clear.'

From this passage it is clear that augurs sometimes prophesied from look-outs to which they attracted birds and studied their calls as well as closely observing their direction of flight, habitat how and where they settled, emnities and feeding habits. Pausanias[73] claims to have seen this very look-out while visiting Thebes. 'Behind the temple of Ammon the Thebans have Teiresias observatory.' Such an observatory was the ancient equivalent of a modern ornithological bird station, with the important difference that the latter is concerned with observing bird behaviour for its own sake, whereas the former was devoted exclusively to divination.

Oedipus[74] too encourages Teiresias 'not to grudge either the voice of ominous birds nor any other way of divination' as a means of ridding Thebes of its plague. But the seer's revelations leads to disquiet and the king, like Hector, duly pours scorn on the augur's art.[75] However, bird omens described by poets are naturally suspect, though something may be gleaned from casual references in later prose authors to more mundane and authentic examples.

Bird signs, as has been seen, were by no means invariable, the appearance or note of a certain bird being regarded as auspicious at one time and as inauspicious at another. So the swallow whose arrival cheered men in spring, could in other circumstances be a sign of disaster. Plutarch[76] describes how prior to the battle of Actium swallows nested under the prow of Cleopatra's flag-ship, but were attacked by others which drove them off and destroyed their nests. In this instance, of course, it was not the swallows per se that constituted an evil omen, but their rout by their rivals.

A similar occurrence is recorded by Alexander of Myndos[77] when a swallow nested in the tent of Antiochus, son of Pyrrhus, and was regarded as a sign that the highly doubtful enterprise in which he was engaged would end in disaster. 'For he set out against the Medes but never returned to Syria, committing suicide by throwing himself over a cliff.'

Arrian[78] again describes how when Alexander was besieging Halicarnassus a swallow flew round his head while he was taking a siesta, kept settling on his bed and twittering in alarm. The weary monarch attempted to brush the bird off but it ended by settling on his head.

Alexander took the omen seriously and reported it to the augur Aristander of Telmissus, who revealed that a friend was proving disloyal, but that his treachery would come to light. He based his findings on the knowledge that the swallow is a friendly bird and also a great gossip.

Pythagoras[79] was credited with numerous curious caveats, but none odder than the injunction never to admit swallows to the house. Since swallows were normally a sign of good luck and were even permitted to befoul the gods' statues in the temples, as Clement of Alexandria[80] observes drily, this particular injunction has been explained as a metaphorical usage, swallows being a nickname for loquacious people.[81] Such a usage, however, seems unlikely at such an early period and Pythagoras' caveat was presumably advanced on hygienic or religious grounds.

Crows are not much mentioned in connection with augury, though a single crow was regarded as a bad omen at a wedding and Aelian[82] explains why. 'Crows are most faithful to one another and when they enter into partnership they display intense affection. You won't see these birds indulging in free or promiscuous intercourse. Experts on these matters say that if one partner dies the other remains a widow. I have heard that in former times men actually sang the 'Crow Song' at weddings, pledging such who came together for the getting of children to be of one mind. Those again who observe the postures and flights of birds maintain that it is an ill omen for those getting married to hear a single crow.' This appears logical enough on the grounds of sympathetic magic but it is by no means so clear why the humble wren[83] or corncrake[84] were also regarded as bad omens at a wedding, or why the nuthatch[85] should be a good omen for lovers.

Ravens, on the other hand, were regarded as highly ominous birds and were said to have conducted Alexander to the temple of Zeus Ammon and later prophesied his death. 'And when the land-marks for the guides became confused and the travellers wandered about and were scattered in bewilderment ravens appeared and assumed the role of guides, flying swiftly in front for them to follow and waiting for them when they marched slowly or lagged behind. But what was most amazing, as Callisthenes says, they called those stragglers by night and by their croaking set them on the correct track.'[86] Later Alexander 'observed many ravens flying about and striking one another [like the eagles in the *Odyssey*] some of which fell dead at his feet, which was regarded as a fatal omen.'[87]

They were also said to have attacked the statue of Athena at Delphi at the time of the Sicilian disaster. 'But Cleitodemus,[88] the first to describe Athenian customs, in his book on Attica says that when the Athenians were preparing their Sicilian expedition a huge flock of ravens descended on Delphi and both pecked the image all over and tore away the gold with their beaks. He also says that the ravens broke off the spear, owls and the imitation fruit on the palm tree.'

Ravens again were said to have forsaken Attica and the Peloponnese after the disaster to Meidius[89] at Pharsalus in 395 BC 'as if they had some means of perceiving signs exchanged between them.'

Owls were not universally regarded as birds of ill-omen, since they were also associated with Athena. So the owl which appeared before the battle of Salamis was interpreted by all the Athenians present as an omen of victory, as Plutarch[90] tells us. 'And it is said by some that while Themistocles was speaking on these matters from the deck of the ship an owl was seen flying on the right of the ships and settled on the rigging.'

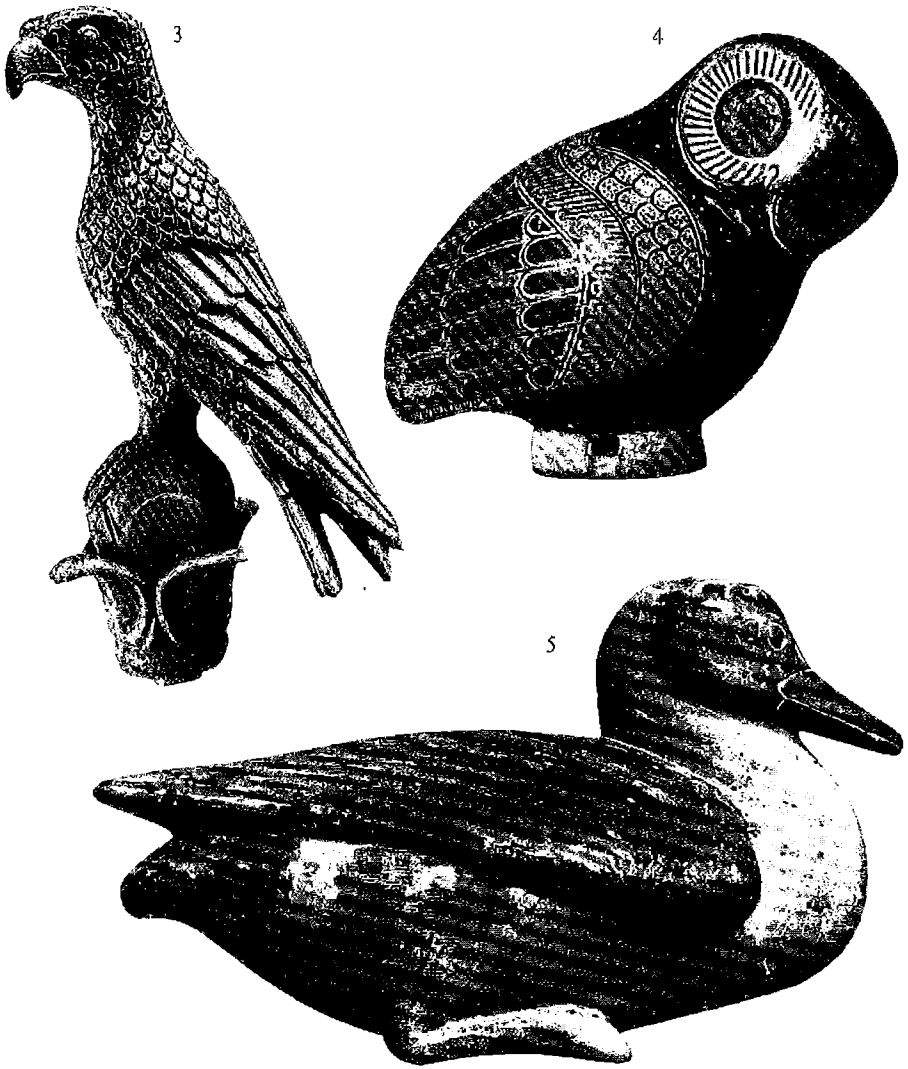
Again when Agathocles[91] was attacking the Carthaginians he released a number of owls to encourage his troops. 'They flew though the columns and by settling on their shields and helmets encouraged the soldiers, who took it for a favourable omen because the bird is regarded as sacred to Athena.'

More insignificant birds like starlings[92] were a sign of a crowd of poor men in their incessant search for food and vain uproar. Even pelicans[93] were regarded as ominous if observed by a river, when they were a sign of thieves and runaways. Pelicans are, of course, voracious and in this respect resemble thieves and behave like runaways when they take to flight. Even partridges[94] could be an evil omen, and when a covey flew up Samians bound for Sybaris fled.

Eagles continued to remain peculiarly ominous throughout the classical period and Xenophon[95] records an interesting example of an eagle omen on his journey through Anatolia.

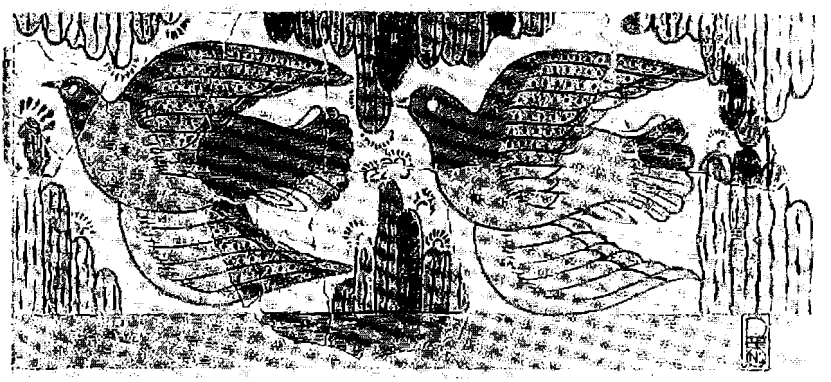
'He recalled how an eagle had screamed on his right when he was setting out for Ephesus with the intention of joining Cyrus. The bird had remained perched at the time and his augur escort said that though the eagle was a powerful, honourable and no common sign yet it boded suffering. For small birds mostly mob the eagle while perching. Neither was it a sign of money for the eagle captures its food on the wing. So he made sacrifice, for heaven gave him a plain sign that he should neither seek the command nor if they chose him accept it.'

1 Crows and crane. Laconian cup by the Arcesilas painter, *c.* 565–560 BC.
2 Raven and Achilles' ghost. Attic black-figured amphora, *c.* 540 BC (?).



3 Bronze eagle on a lotus flower of late classical style, 3rd century BC.
4 Proto-Corinthian scent bottle in the form of an owl, *c.* 650–625 BC.
5 East Greek lethykos in the form of a duck, *c.* 650–625 BC.

6 Pigeons. Piet de Jong's reconstruction of the blue bird fresco from Pylos, Palace of Nestor, *c.* 1250 BC.
7 Cattle egret. Late Bronze Age crater from Enkomi (Cyprus), *c.* 1250 BC.
8 Falcon. Attic black-figured vase on white ground, probably made by Nikosthenes, *c.* 520 BC.
9 Stilt. Cypro-Archaic jug in 'free field style', *c.* 700 BC.



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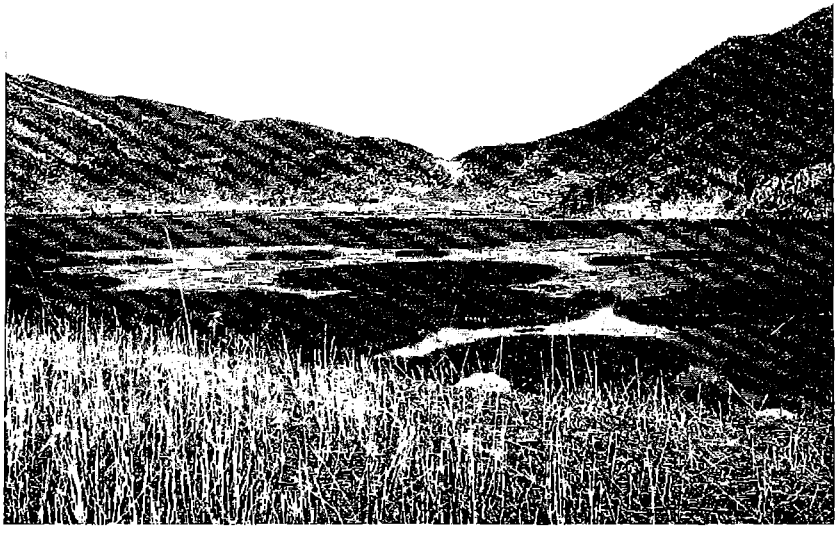
10 Great white heron.
Attic black-figured phiale.
Six technique, late 6th century BC.

11 Demoiselle cranes.
Laconian hydria
from Vulci, *c.* 540 BC.

12 Cocks and hens. Attic black-figured band cup by the Tleson painter, from Tarentum, *c.* 560 BC.

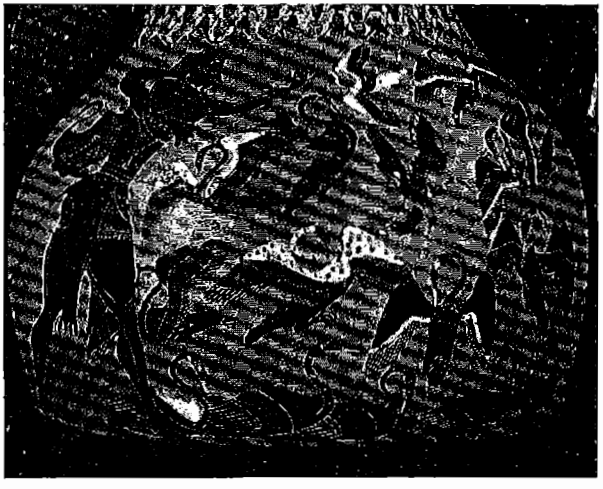
13 Six youths riding upon ostriches. Attic black-figured skyphos of the 6th century BC.



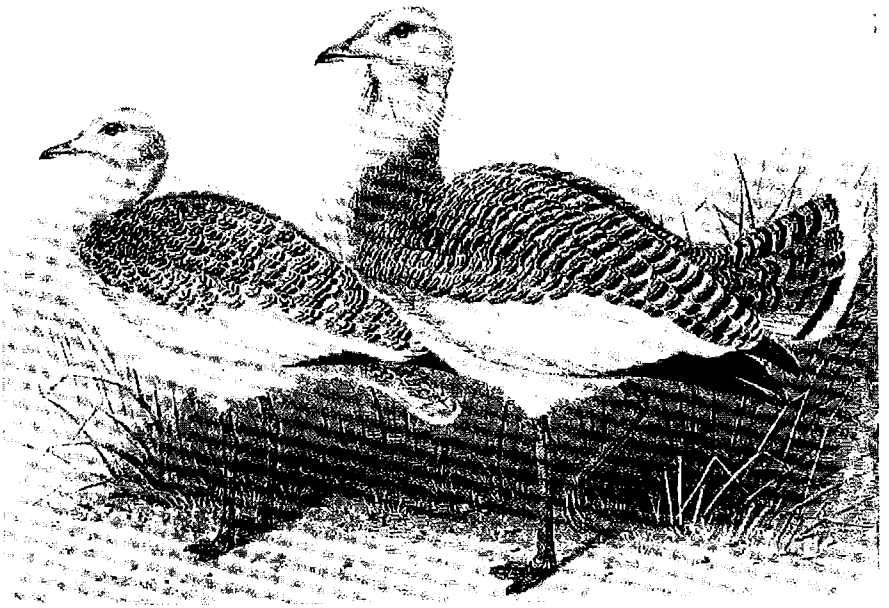
14 Goose girl. Theban Orchomenos.
15 Lake Stymphalus, Arcadia. Haunt of fabulous birds.

16 Sparrow and snake. 'Cadmos killing the dragon of Thebes'. Laconian black-figured cup of the 6th century BC.

17 Cock-fighting. Attic red-figured cup, 400 BC.

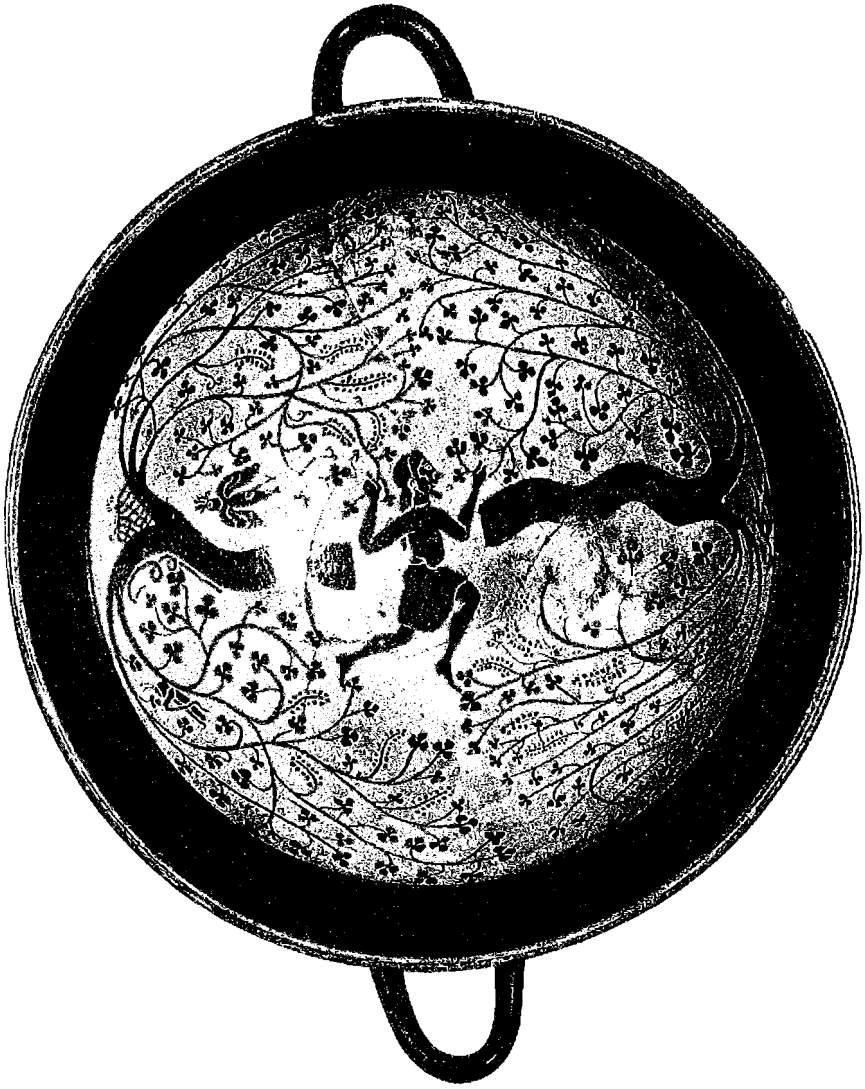


18 Heracles and the Stymphalian birds. Attic black-figured belly amphora of Group E from Vulci, *c.* 550 BC.



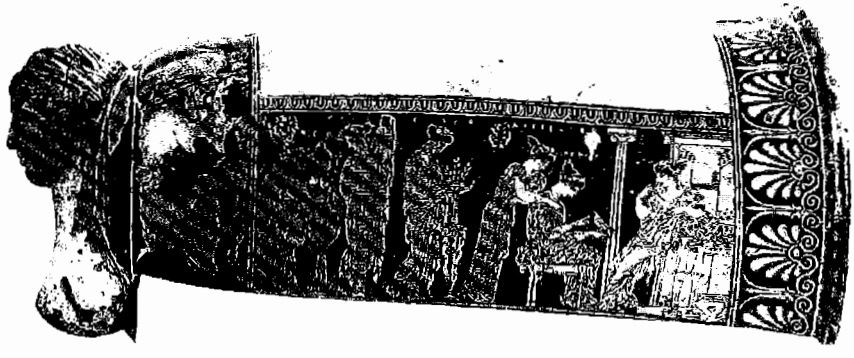
19 *Great Bustard* by Henry Jones.

20 *Francolins* by Henry Jones.



21 Birdnester. Ionian cup, *c.* 550 BC.

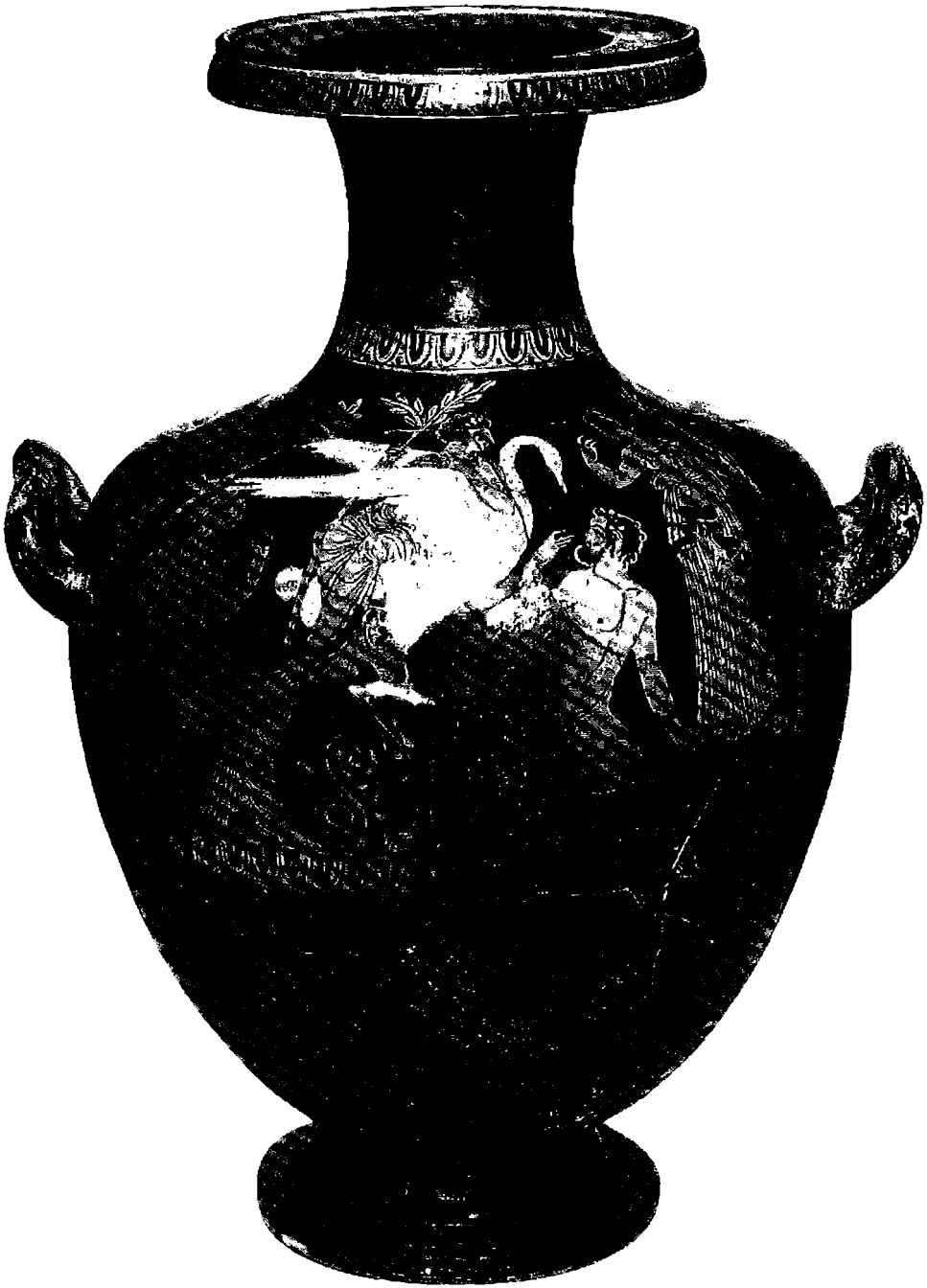
22 & 23 Attic black-figured hydria from Italy. Front: eagles and hare. Back: eagles and gazelle. So called 'Caretan' class, *c.* 540–530 BC.



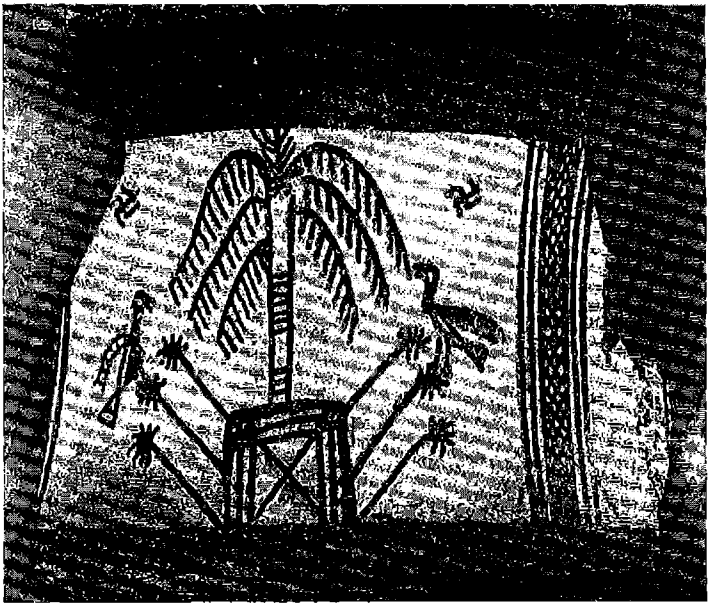
24 Girl with pet bird. Attic red-figured lekythos by Aison, *c.* 420–390 BC.

25 Prometheus and the eagle. Laconian black-figured cyclix from Caere, *c.* 550 BC.

26 Aphrodite seated on a swan. Attic white-ground cyclix from Camirus, *c.* 470–465 BC.

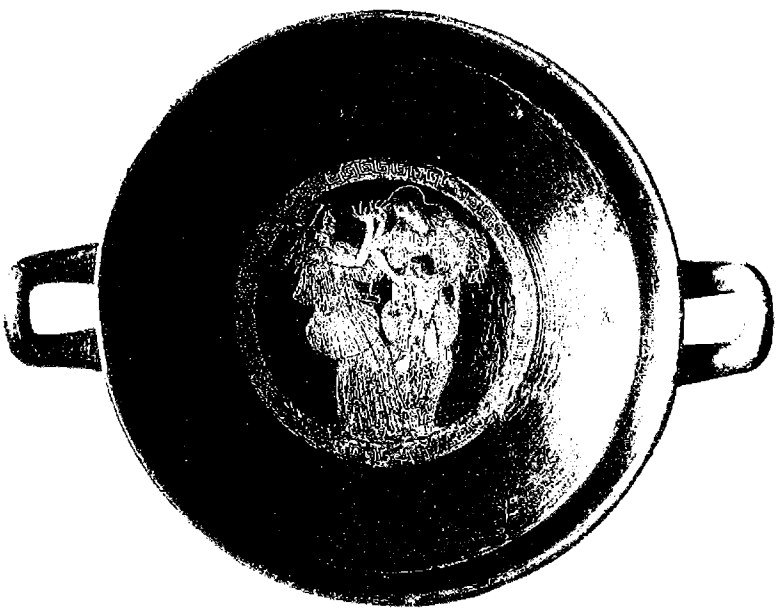


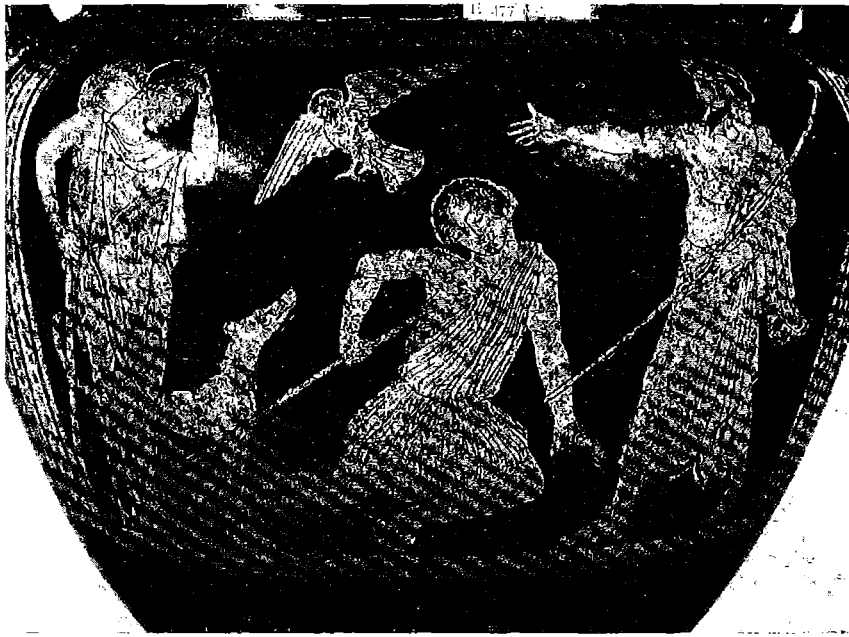
27 Apollo and swan. Attic red-figured hydria from Cyrenaica, late red-figured style, *c.* 380 BC.

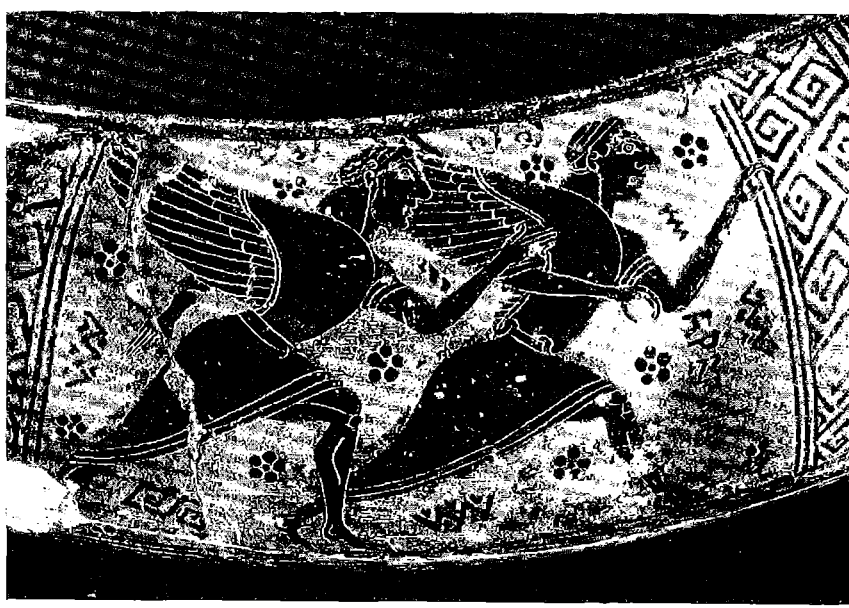


28 Turtle doves. Archaic crater, from Cyprus, *c.* 700 BC.

29 Philomela, Procne and Itylus. Attic red-figured cup by Makron, *c.* 490–480 BC.



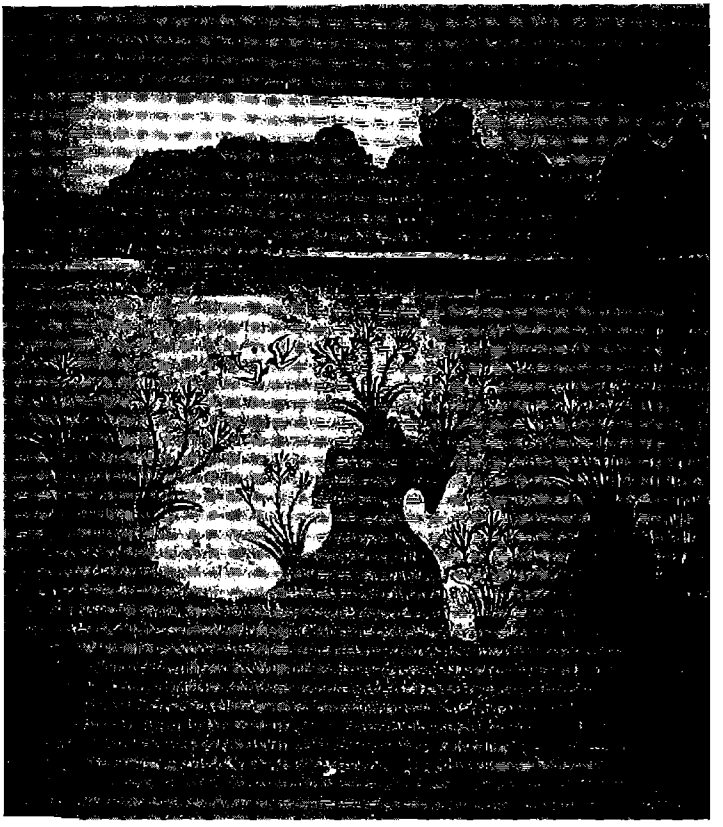




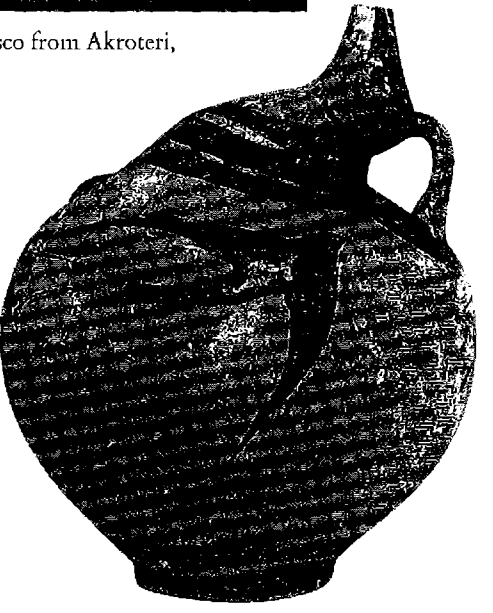
30 Procris. Attic red-figured crater, *c.* 440 BC.

31 Harpies. Attic black-figured skyphos from Aegina, late 7th century BC.

32 Odysseus and Sirens. Attic red-figured stamnos, 490 BC, by the Siren painter from Vulci.



33 Lilies and swallows. Late Minoan fresco from Akroteri, Thera, *c.* 1500 BC?



34 Swallows. Late Minoan bowl from Akroteri, Thera.

The perching eagle warned Xenophon that there was no profit to be gained by seeking the command, while the mobbing birds implied that if he did so it would inevitably lead to discord. This omen is of special interest in view of the augural code from Ephesus, which has already been discussed, and suggests that augury was still flourishing there at the end of the fifth century BC.

CHAPTER XIV

MAGICAL AND MEDICINAL BIRDS

The magical bird par excellence in ancient Greece was the wryneck (*iynx*). It is hard to understand how such a small ('a little larger than a sparrow' Aristotle)[1] and inconspicuous bird ever came to be associated with magic in the first place and in particular with the charming back of errant lovers. The comparative rarity of the wryneck and shy, skulking habits merely adds to the mystery. Also it is a migrant which arrives with the cuckoo in spring and is not much observed or heard later. Furthermore it is now rarely observed in Greece, though firm evidence is lacking.

The wryneck's sole notable characteristic is its ability to twist its neck round without moving its body. It also hisses at the nest like a marsh tit and darts out its tongue. These snake-like habits appear to have impressed the Ancients and persuaded A. B. Cook[2] that the wryneck was regarded as a solar emblem, like the snakes found with solar discs in oriental art. However that may be the bird was cruelly spread-eagled on the four spokes of a wheel and spun swiftly, first in one direction and then in the other. 'Witches', an ancient commentator[3] informs us, 'regard this bird as suitable for employment as a love-charm. For they take it, bind it to a wheel and whirl it round while uttering incantations. Others say they drag out its inwards and attach them to a wheel.' A third authority[4] says much the same, describing the wryneck as 'spread-eagled by its wings to a little wheel equidistantly and whirled round in the lover's name.'

The *locus classicus* and earliest reference to the wryneck as a love charm is found in Pindar's[5] fourth Pythian Ode, where Aphrodite invents it to make Medea fall in love with Jason. 'But she of Cyprus, queen of swiftest darts, yoking the dappled wryneck all asprawl to the inescapable wheel, brought down from Olympus the bird of madness for the first time among men and taught Aeson's wise son the prayer charms.'

The wryneck is a woodland haunting species and doubtless hard to obtain so that in the course of time the name was transferred to the wheel, which operated without the bird. In art the wheel was often depicted with a serrated edge, which lent support to Cook's theory

that it was originally a solar emblem. In the second Idyll of Theocritus[6] the love-lorn woman employs it to charm back her faithless lover. 'Wryneck bring back that man of mine to my house.'

The wryneck wheels varied in material and workmanship and some were very costly. 'Niko's[7] wryneck which knows how to charm a man across the ocean and boys from their chambers, all chased with gold.'

It was patently distinct from the rhombos or bull-roarer, since it was spun, not swung.[8]

The curious tradition that 'golden wrynecks sang above the pediment' of the temple of Apollo at Delphi has been dismissed as a fairy story. Pindar,[9] who first mentions the objects, describes them as *keledones* i.e. charmers, whatever the precise significance of the term. But according to Philostratus[10] the famous mystic Apollonius of Tyana, in his attack on the luxury-loving worship of Apollo referred to 'golden wrynecks, which echoed the Sirens' spell'. But wrynecks do not sing like sirens and no light is shed on the mystery by Philostratus'[11] description of the judgment hall at Babylon. 'Here the king gives judgment and golden wrynecks, four in number, are hung from the ceiling, as a pledge of divine fate.'

Since sun-discs appear in art in a similar context Cook[12] considered this further evidence that the wryneck and sun-disc were originally the same. The difficulty, however, is to see how a solar emblem became a love charm, and the wryneck and its wheel remains a fascinating enigma.

Both the hoopoe and woodpecker (which were sometimes confused) were credited with the ability to perform impossible feats. Both birds nested in holes, the hoopoe usually near the ground in a wall, heap of stones or the stump of a tree, the woodpecker higher up in a cavity which it had excavated. If in either case the hole were blocked up, though it is hard to conceive the purpose of such a cruel and senseless action, the birds were reputed to regain access by the application of a herb. The wider application of such an Open Sesame did not go unremarked by Aelian.[13]

'It chanced that this bird [i.e. a hoopoe] had reared its brood in a crack in a stone, which had split with time, in a deserted part of a fort. Well the guardian of the fort seeing the chicks inside plastered up the hole with mud. When the hoopoe returned and saw that it had been excluded it fetched a herb and applied it to the mud. Whereupon the mud melted and the bird rejoined its offspring and then flew off to get food. So the man plastered up the entrance a second time, but the bird

reopened the hole with the same herb. When the same thing happened on the third occasion the guardian seeing how matters stood gathered the herb on his own account and employed it by no means for the same purpose, but opened up the treasures which did not belong to him.'

Aelian[14] recounts an even more far-fetched tale about the woodpecker. 'If you insert a stone and block up the entrance the aforementioned bird is not taken in but fetches a herb which is distasteful to the stone and sets it against it. The stone in disgust and unable to stand the smell leaps out and its home burrow is opened up again.'

Since hornbills both of the Indian and African variety have the curious habit of walling up their mates during the nesting season, sometimes for a very considerable period,[15] and feeding them through the narrowed entrance it has been suggested that the tale about the hoopoe and woodpecker originated with the hornbill. But probably the tale was more imaginative than real.

Both the woodpecker and hoopoe were believed to possess medicinal powers. According to the work on the curative properties of stones, plants and animals, known as Cyranides[16] (first or second century AD) boiled woodpecker was a sovereign remedy against magic spells. As for the hoopoe 'If a man hung up the left wing of a hoopoe on his wedding night nothing would eventuate.'[17] Or again 'If a man takes a hoopoe's heart while still warm and beating he will be happy for the rest of his life.'[18]

The hoopoe was also associated with Solomon and according to the *Hortus Sanitatis*[19] (thirteenth century AD) if a man lost his memory all he had to do to regain it was to sit beneath a hoopoe's tongue. Its nest was also said to contain a magical stone,[20] like the 'aetites' of the eagle.

Dionysius[21] refers to the eagle stone. 'When they wish to breed they get a stone and put it in their eyries to insure that the eggs hatch at the proper time and to prevent the eaglets being born prematurely. According to some authorities it is brought from the mountains of the Caucasus, and to others from the shores of the ocean.' The stone was of a dazzling white colour, filled with wind and made a noise when shaken. If attached to a pregnant woman it would prevent abortion. It also possessed the useful property of cooling boiling water.

Swallow stones (*chelidoniai*)[22] were also known. They were reputed to be given by the swallow to her first-born and were as hard to come by as the mythical foal caul hippomanes,[23] unless all the fledglings were cut open.[24] The stones were used as amulets (*periapta*) and were regarded as

cures for epilepsy. Yet another stone, known as the *callais*,[25] was said to be found in the nest of the blackcap.

Many birds were regarded as magical cures for human ailments. By a kind of sympathetic magic eagle's gall[26] mixed with Attic honey and rubbed on the eyes was believed to improve the sight. Cranes' brains, on the other hand, were a powerful aphrodisiac.

'Their brain is endowed with some form of charm which turns women into push-overs'! according to Aelian.[27] Quails' brains, however, Galen,[28] the doyen of Greek medicine informs us, cured epilepsy, while quails themselves cured kidney trouble. The crested lark[29] when roasted and eaten was a cure for cholic. The Thracians tore out the bird's heart while it was still alive and bound it to the left thigh.[30] Swallows were said to cure angina[31] and diphtheria,[32] if the heart or dung were eaten or the bird swallowed whole! Even the mud from its nest was used as embrocation.[33] More readily intelligible was its efficacy as a love philtre, if you saw a swallow first![34]

Pigeons, according to Galen,[35] who deals at length with the medicinal powers of their flesh, blood, dung and feathers, cured common ailments such as burns, jaundice, ulcers and cases of poisoning. The raven[36] if buried for forty days in dung and subsequently burned and dried was a remedy for gout, while jackdaws[37] made eyelashes grow. Owls[38] were nailed up on buildings with wings outspread as a prophylactic against hailstones, a curious custom which survived in Germany into the last century as a magical protection against lightning.[39] Since owls' eyes were remarkably bright they were associated with lightning and by the operation of sympathetic magic were believed capable of protecting buildings.

Even the nightingale[40] was eaten, its flesh being regarded as a cure for sleeplessness. In this case reverse magic was in operation since the nightingale was a wakeful bird. The parrot too when eaten was a certain cure for jaundice.

Geese[41] were also widely used in magic and medicine. The tongue torn from a living goose was said to be able to elicit secrets from a woman, while the fat, dung, bile, brain and blood were all employed as remedies.

Of all birds the vulture might have been considered perhaps the least likely candidate for medicinal usage. Yet a vulture's excrement, according to the army physician Dioscurides[42] (first century AD), was employed to procure abortion. Its liver,[43] again, was able to cure cataracts and its gut indigestion.[44] The lammergeyer's[45] stomach was a cure for the water, while its thigh bone cured varicose veins.[46]

A stork's stomach cured the murrain in goats and sheep,[47] while a young stork was a prophylactic for ophthalmia.[48]

Even the ostrich possessed medicinal value as Aelian[49] describes. 'If you kill an ostrich and clean out its belly it will be found to contain stones, which the bird has swallowed and kept in its gizzard and eventually digests. These stones are beneficial to the human digestion. Its sinews too and fat benefit human sinews [presumably because the bird ran so fast].'

There was, of course, seemingly, little logic in many of these remedies, except that, like the elements of the witch's brew, the harder they were to obtain the more likely they were believed to prove efficacious.

By a strange quirk birds were believed to possess the power of curing their own real or fancied ailments. Ring doves put bay shoots in their nests in order to protect their offspring, while ravens used 'agnos', a type of willow. Kites employed buck-thorn, falcons succory, turtle-doves the fruit of the iris, hoopoes maidenhead fern, crows vervain, shearwaters ivy, herons crabs, partridges reed-heads, thrushes sprigs of myrtle, the lark dog's tooth and eagles the fabulous eagle-stone. Such is Aelian's[50] list. Possibly it was founded on the plants and objects found in the nests of the species mentioned, but in general the list appears arbitrary.

CHAPTER XV

BIRDS AS PETS

All men at all periods have kept pets and the Greeks were no exception. Birds were kept mainly as decoys, as Aristophanes[1] reminded them. 'We have been deceived and suffered wicked wrongs. For he who was our friend and traversed our fields and shared our food has transgressed the ancient covenant and has broken the law of the birds. He has summoned us into a trap.'

But they were also kept for cock-fighting or quail-tapping as well as singing. There are, however, comparatively few references to caged singing birds, with the exception of the nightingale about which Aelian[2] records two diametrically opposed views. 'The nightingale', he writes, 'is the most freedom loving bird of all and that is why when a full grown bird is caught and caged it refuses to sing and gets its own back on its captor for its enslavement by silence.' Later he quotes from Charnis[3] of Massilia who stated that the nightingale's fondness for music was only equalled by its love of fame. 'At any rate,' he goes on, 'when left to itself in a lonely spot the bird is content to sing a simple song without elaboration. But when it is captured and has an audience it varies its song and trills a melting refrain.'

There is no evidence that the blue rock thrush was ever kept as a caged bird in Greece, though it certainly was in Rome and still is in modern Italy. The bird is an excellent singer and is generally thought to have been the 'sparrow'[4] of which Lesbia was so fond in Catullus' famous poem.

The crow family made intelligent and amusing pets, and so it is hardly surprising to find Peisthetaerus and Euelpides setting out for Cloudcuckootown with a crow and a jackdaw as guides. The daw cost an obol and the crow thrice that amount, which suggests that they were readily obtainable.[5] Certainly a crow was carried round by the singers of the Crow Song,[6] who invited the bystanders and householders to contribute to the crow. Probably the bird's antics and powers of mimicry could be relied on to excite the generosity of the spectators, always supposing that the singers did not hawk round a dead crow, like the Wren Boys in the Isle of Man.[7]

'In Egypt', Aelian[8] informs us, rarely, as usual, at a loss for a good

story, 'by the Crocodile City near the lake called Moeris they show a crow's tomb, and explain it as follows. The Pharaoh called Mares [Amenhotep III] possessed a wonderful tame crow which he used as an express delivery for any despatches which he wanted to send. After hearing the destination the bird knew the direction it must take, which place it must pass and which marked the end of its journey. In return for its services Mares honoured it on its demise with a monument and a tomb.'

The Egyptians, of course, from the time of Herodotus, took advantage of the credulity of the Greeks.

As for the daw Theophrastus[9] describes the Man of Petty Ambition as the type of man who would go to the trouble of providing his tame jackdaw with a little bronze shield, from which it could more readily hop on to the miniature ladder which he was also at pains to provide.

Bird mimics of every kind were greatly in demand and their powers admired and exaggerated. 'Ravens,' says Porphyry[10] 'jays, robins [?] and parrots imitate and remember what they hear and pay attention to the words of their instructors. Equipped with this knowledge they are able to reveal wrong-doers.'

Pliny[11] says much the same of a Spanish crow 'jet black in colour' which could repeat whole sentences, and was quick to increase its vocabulary. The crow again, according to a well-known fable,[12] was intelligent enough to drop stones into an urn in order to bring the water level up to where it could reach it and was thus regarded as being among the most sagacious members of the tribe.

Once a raven, like Mares' crow, was honoured with a public funeral. 'During the reign of Tiberius a raven chick from a brood hatched above the temple of Castor flew down to a cobbler's shop nearby and was welcomed by the owner on religious grounds. It soon learned to talk and flew every morning to the Rostra facing the Forum where it used to greet Tiberius and later Germanicus and Drusus Caesar by name as well as the wondering passers-by before returning to the cobbler's. It performed the same feat for several years and gained a huge reputation. It was done to death by the tenant of a neighbouring shop, whether through envy of his neighbour's success or in a sudden fit of anger, as he alleged, because his stock of shoes had been befouled by the bird's droppings. This roused such a storm of indignation that he was driven from the neighbourhood and ultimately murdered. The bird's funeral was attended by enormous crowds and its draped bier carried on the shoulders of two Ethiopians with a piper leading the

procession and wreaths of every kind right up to the pyre which had been erected on the right hand side of the Appian Way by the second milestone on the ground known as "Rediculus' Plain".' The event was so well known that Pliny[13] was able to give the actual date of the obsequies which were celebrated on 28 March 36 AD.

These examples are admittedly drawn from Latin literature, but throw light on the attitude of the Ancients to the raven.

We are also told that the Caesars possessed starlings as well as nightingales which were said to be fluent both in Latin and Greek.[14] The starling, of course, is an excellent mimic even in the wild, while the nightingale will answer a human voice mocking it,[15] though it is not a mimic in the ordinary sense. The method employed, according to Pliny,[16] was to keep the birds separate from other birds so that the only sounds they heard were human.

Jays were also kept as mimics for, as Aelian[17] rightly claimed, 'The jay is an excellent mimic of all other sounds and best of all of the human voice.'

Dionysius[18] also commented on the bird's remarkable imitative powers. At first, he said, he took it for a kid forsaken by its dam. Then he thought it was a calf, then a sheep and finally a shepherd's whistle. The parvenu Petronius[19] kept one in a cage near the entrance to his mansion.

According to Aristotle[20] all birds with short necks and beaks were good mimics. He then goes on to discuss the parrot, the best mimic of all. 'The Indian bird, i.e. the parrot, which they call the bird with the human voice, falls into this category. It becomes even more insolent after drinking wine.'

The Greek, of course, was quick to confuse a bird's with a human being's reaction. It was not because it was drunk that a parrot grew outrageous, but because when befuddled it was likely to repeat anything, including improper language, which it had learned from its captors and which happened to come into its head.

'Parrots take their mimicry to the point of actually mastering our language', Dionysius[21] observes, 'and are best kept in metal cages because they can easily bite through wood and make good their escape.' Indeed Crinagoras,[22] who flourished during the reign of Augustus, appears to refer to such an eventuality in a flattering poem. 'The parrot which talks with a human voice forsook its wicker cage and flew away to the woods on its gaudy wing. In its anxiety to greet great Caesar it never forgot his name even among the mountains.'

By Arrian's[23] day (second century AD) the parrot's powers of mimicry were so well known that the historian declines to embark upon the topic. 'I have seen several myself' he says 'and met others acquainted with the bird, so will not enlarge.'

Parrots were regarded as sacred in India, according to Aelian.[24] 'But no Indian eats a parrot despite their numbers. The reason is that Brahmins regard them as sacred and set them above all other birds. And they justify themselves on the grounds that the parrot is the only bird that is able to imitate the human voice most clearly.'

Even birds like woodpeckers[25] were kept in cages. The bird which had the intelligence to place a nut in a vice the better to crack it has already been mentioned (chap. IV). Sir D'Arcy Thompson argued that the bird must have been a nutcracker (*nucufraga caryocatactes*) which is found in Yugoslavia, but not apparently in Greece, south of Macedonia and Thrace[26] presumably on the grounds that the woodpeckers are mainly insect feeders. But woodpeckers also eat nuts and acorns and in captivity may well have behaved as described.

Decoy partridges were also kept as pets and their notes improved by a diet of leeks. 'Why do leeks improve speech?' Aristotle[27] inquires in the *Problems* 'since it happens even in the case of partridges?'

So fond was one poet of the pet partridge which had been killed by his cat that he composed an epigram on the subject. 'No more, methinks, poor partridge, exiled from the rocks does your home woven from wickerwood contain you; nor with the brilliance of the bright-eyed dawn do you rustle the tips of your sun-warmed feathers. The cat bit your head off, but I seized all the rest, and did not satisfy her savage jaws. Now shall the dust not lie light on you, but heavy, lest she drag out your remains.'[28]

Later the same poet turns against the miscreant. 'Does the house-cat expect to go on living in my house after eating my partridge? No, I will not permit, dear partridge, your passing to go unavenged, for on your corse I will slay your foe.'[29]

Inspired by the incident a friend also entered the lists on behalf of the murdered bird. 'Cat, you wretch, rival of man-killing hounds, you are one of Actaeon's fell monsters. By eating this partridge you have brought sorrow to your master, just as if you had eaten him yourself. You have now set your mind on partridges. Meantime the mice play making off with your scraps.'[30]

There is still another poem about a partridge's demise, the last line of which clearly influenced Catullus' description of the fate of Lesbia's

sparrow. 'No longer, decoy partridge, do you utter your clear call through the shady copse, hunting your dappled comrades in the feeding place in the wood. For you are gone on the last journey to the house of Acheron.'[31]

The killing of a cock by a fox or other predator was duly recorded in sentimental verse. 'No longer as before shall you shake your wings repeatedly, rise early and rouse me from my couch. Alas the thief stole upon you while you slumbered and slew you, swiftly tearing your throat with its claw.'[32]

Alcibiades, according to Plutarch,[33] kept a tame quail on his person. 'Alcibiades first gained popularity by making a donation of money to the people. While doing so the pet quail escaped, which he kept under his robe. The Athenians cheered when it flew off, but it was recaptured by a bo'sun named Antiochus, for Alcibiades had the greatest affection for the bird.' Doubtless the quail in question was a champion either as a fighter or for its gameness when tapped and doubtless roysterers like Alcibiades kept the birds on their persons ready to face any challengers. Also its presence would certainly have endeared him to the sporting section of the populace.

Socrates,[34] nevertheless, expressed contempt for such foibles. 'Everyone', he says, 'deserves some possession, be it horses, dogs or gold. But I only desire friendship – for a good friend is more valuable than the most expensive quail or cock.'

'Think of them all as little pet quails', says Aristophanes[35] in the *Peace*. Clearly quails and cocks inspired in ancient times the kind of affection lavished nowadays on racing pigeons.

Abroad birds were kept in lavish outdoor aviaries. Aelian[36] describes one belonging to an Indian prince. 'As for the remaining details it is not within the scope of this narrative to relate. But they keep tame peacocks and pheasants in the parks. They dwell among cultivated shrubs to which the royal gardeners devote proper attention. In addition there are shady groves and herbage growing about them and boughs interwoven with cunning forester's art . . . There are also other birds free and unenclosed, which come of their own free will and roost and nest in these trees.'

Gifts of birds were made to Indian kings for more mundane reasons, including cranes, geese, fowls, ducks, doves, francolins, partridges and even smaller birds. The gifts were uncovered to show how plump the birds were![37]

Birds were used as lovers' gifts as the poets bear witness. 'I have

come with a present of birds', says a character in Menander,[38] while in the fifth Idyll of Theocritus[39] a shepherd vows, 'I'll give the girl a dove [*phassa*], taking it down from the juniper; for there it nests.'

What the girl would do with a live pigeon perhaps it is impertinent to inquire. But wild pigeons are hard to catch, so the gift was presumably calculated to capture the girl's fancy because her lover had taken pains and displayed skill in obtaining it. In fact the gift for some reason failed to please for the shepherd later complains, 'I do not love Alcippa, for the other day she did not take me by the ears and kiss me when I gave her the dove.'

'Dove'[40] and 'pigeon'[41] were terms of endearment. 'Pigeon'[42] also possessed an overt erotic significance like the French 'poule' for prostitute. In the *Birds*[43] Aristophanes raised a laugh by the apparently innocent invitation. 'Come quickly into the brake and wake the nightingale', a familiar *double entendre* for the female orgasm. The phrase is obscene even in Bocaccio. There is a similar *double entendre* in the use of 'swallow' in the same poet's *Lysistrata*.[44]

'Whenever swallows crowd in one place, fleeing the hoopoes and keeping away from coots [*phalaris* – a play on phallus] then will be an end of evils.'

Geese too were lovers' gifts[45] and were enamoured of their keepers.[46] Even eagles were kept as pets and proved most affectionate. One belonged to King Pyrrhus and pined when he died, while a bird kept by a girl threw itself on her funeral pyre,[47] as did an eaglet kept by a boy.[48]

CHAPTER XVI

SACRED BIRDS

Certain major deities were closely associated with a particular bird (or birds) which came to be regarded as their divine familiars. The three best known sacred birds were the eagle of Zeus, the owl of Athena and the falcon of Apollo, all three of which are instanced by Aristophanes[1] as evidence for the birds' claim to sovereignty.

'But the most remarkable thing of all Zeus who rules at present stands with an eagle on his head, being a monarch, while his daughter wears an owl and Apollo, being a lackey, a falcon.'

Neither Athena nor Apollo were solely associated with the owl and the falcon, though these ascriptions were the most generally accepted. A bluff near Megara, Pausanias[2] informs us, was surnamed 'Athena Shearwater', while the goddess was associated with the crow at Corone[3] (Crow Town) in Messenia and with the cock at Elis.[4] The swan was also sacred to Apollo, but the eagle remained exclusively Zeus'.

The eagle was, and is, a royal emblem[5] and it was only natural that it should have been generally regarded as enjoying some special relationship with the sky-god whose broad domain it was privileged to share. In the *Iliad*, as we have seen, the eagle was regarded as an omen of Zeus, offering a sure indication of the god's will. It was, in effect, the king god's own private emissary which he invariably employed when communicating with men, reserving Iris and Hermes for bearing messages to the gods. Occasionally he employed eagles on other missions, such as ascertaining the centre of the world.

'A story is told that Zeus, wishing to find the centre of the world despatched a pair of eagles, moving at the same speed, from west and east respectively. They, flying in opposite directions, met at Pytho, and so indicated the centre of the world.'[6]

At Delphi[7] were preserved images of the eagles which had been instrumental in establishing the oracle's supremacy and whose living prototypes could be daily observed wheeling about the cliffs overlooking the sanctuary.

Zeus also employed the eagle as an instrument of punishment as he did in the case of Prometheus. In order to revenge himself on the Titan

who stole fire from heaven and gave it to mankind, as well as attempting to cheat him over the meat at a sacrifice, Zeus devised an exceedingly grim form of crucifixion.

'He bound Prometheus the wily', says Hesiod,[8] 'with unbreakable fetters, and cruel bonds, driving a pillar through his middle and launched against him a long-winged bird. It devoured his immortal liver which grew again by night as much in every way as the long-winged bird devoured throughout the day. But Heracles, hero son of trim-ankled Alcmena, slew it and freed Japetus' son from the cruel plague and released him from his affliction, not without the will of high-ruling Zeus.'

Since in modern Anatolia dead eagles were impaled against the doors of houses in the belief that they could ward off lightning the French savant Salomon Reinach[9] suspected that the myth about Prometheus had its origin in this practice. However there is very little evidence that the eagle was associated with lightning in ancient Greece. It is true that Aristophanes[10] quotes, or more probably misquotes for comic purposes, some lines from Aeschylus about burning down 'Amphion's house with fire-burning eagles'. It is also true that a species of eagle was described as 'phlegyas' i.e. 'fiery', in the *Shield of Heracles*,[11] which may, however, merely refer to its colour. But that is all.

Whatever the origin of the Prometheus myth a similar fate befell the giant Tityos, who had offered violence to the goddess Leto. According to one version he was slain by Zeus and his punishment was to lie for eternity in the underworld while two vultures fed on his liver, which was regarded as the seat of the desires.[12]

A curious parallel to the story of Isaac and Jacob is preserved by Plutarch.[13] Helen of Troy was led to an altar for sacrifice in order to halt a plague. Suddenly an eagle snatched the knife from the priest's hand. Helen, of course, was Zeus' daughter.

The close relationship between Zeus and the eagle was commemoraated in art. A Laconian[14] cup shows the god seated with an eagle flying towards him, while later coins[15] from Arcadia and Olympia depict the god with eagles flying away, or holding a thunder-bolt in one hand and an eagle in the other. By the time of Alexander Zeus[16] is represented, still seated, with an eagle resting on his palm. More impressive were the twin eagles set on pillars before one of the god's most ancient altars on Mount Lycaeus in Arcadia.

'Before the altar', Pausanias[17] informs us 'are two pillars facing east. The gilt eagles standing on them are even older than the pillars.' Even

the signal for the start of the chariot race at Olympia, where the Games were held in Zeus' honour, was given by the release of a mechanical eagle.[18] Eagles were also represented perching on the god's sceptre, as it was on that of Darius.[19] The best known example of an eagle-tipped sceptre was the one carved by Phidias for the colossal cult image of Zeus in the temple at Olympia.

'In the god's left hand', says Pausanias,[20] 'is a sceptre gilded with precious metals. The bird seated on the sceptre is an eagle.'

Possibly Pindar[21] had in mind a similar artifact when he described the eagle sleeping on Zeus' sceptre (see p. 123). Sophocles[22] too refers to 'the eagle of Zeus, sitting on the sceptre', while both eagle and an eagle-tipped sceptre appear in connection with Zeus on coins of Gortyn[23] dating from the fifth century BC.

So it has been argued, not least by the ancient commentator on the passage already quoted, that when Aristophanes refers to Zeus 'with an eagle on his head', he really meant 'on his sceptre'. Yet the image of Athena at Elis was crowned with a cock[24] and that of Artemis with a hawk on the Grächwil Hydria[25] while many of the Bronze Age idols to be discussed in the following chapter bore birds on their heads. Possibly the poet was familiar with a type of artifact unknown to us, but the phrase, as we shall see, raises interesting problems.

'In the city of Helios,' said the comic poet Antiphanes,[26] 'they say there are phoenixes, in Athens owls.'

Athena's sacred bird was the little owl which dwelt in the crannies of the Acropolis.[27] So ubiquitous and familiar was the bird that it gave rise to the proverb 'owls to Athens',[28] which was equivalent to 'coals to Newcastle'. It was therefore only natural that the owl should become the emblem of Athens and be represented on its coinage.[29] It was perhaps equally natural that it should come to be regarded as the familiar of the city's guardian goddess whose temple shared its habitat. However, the discovery of vases with owl heads at Troy persuaded Schliemann[30] that Athena was in origin an owl goddess.

'In January 1874 I made bold to declare that the hundreds of female idols and vases with owl-heads, found in the prehistoric cities of Hissarlik, could represent but one goddess, and that this goddess could be none other than Athene, the tutelary goddess of Troy; all the more so as Homer continually calls her *glaukopis* [that is, literally translated, 'with the face of an owl'] and never gives this epithet to any other goddess or mortal woman.'

In this contention Schliemann was supported by the French arch-

aeologist Lenormant[31] as well as by Otto Keller,[32] the German expert on ancient beasts. The view that animal attributes of deities represented a residue from a time when the deities themselves were worshipped, like their Egyptian counterparts, in animal shape was advanced in its most extreme form by Reinach.[33] 'There is only one scientific explanation; it is the one which consists of regarding the sacred animals of classical mythology as the inheritors of animal gods.' His fellow-countryman Pottier[34] held a like view. The owl 'represents the memory of a very ancient local owl-goddess.'

There are clearly powerful arguments to support the view that Athens was once an owl-goddess, but it is curious that although she frequently assumes bird form in Homer and is described as 'owl-faced' on no less than ninety-two occasions, she never takes the shape of an owl. Also it is hard to see by what stages a goddess of owls became a deity of war on the one hand and of the peaceful arts on the other. Pausanias'[35] statements that Athena was surnamed 'Shearwater' near Megara, associated with the crow at Corone-Crow-city[36] and Titane[37] and that her helmet at Elis[38] was crowned with a cock by no means prove that she was not more generally associated with the owl. Her association with the cock was natural enough, as Pausanias[39] himself comments, since cocks were notoriously pugnacious birds. The association dates at least from the sixth century BC. According to a late source the *krex*[40] was also her messenger.

The falcon (or hawk) is described in Homer[41] as Apollo's 'swift messenger' and continued to be regarded as his familiar in subsequent ages. The reason for the association is perfectly patent. Apollo as the son of Zeus was represented by a similar, but lesser raptor than the eagle. Also the god visited men with plagues, unexpected, swift and deadly as the falcon's stoop. But Apollo, like Athena, had another side, being god of purity and prophecy as well as the patron of music and intellectual pursuits. In this capacity his sacred bird was the swan, renowned for its singing.

The mystery of the wild swan's singing has never been satisfactorily resolved. The bird in question, the whooper swan, which nests in high latitudes and migrates north in spring and south in winter, is said by ornithologists who have visited its breeding haunts in Iceland and elsewhere to utter a range of low musical notes.[42] The difficulty is to understand how knowledge of this song, which is apparently confined to the breeding season gave rise to the myth that wild swans sang before they died or indeed at any time.[43] Possibly the birds whooped in

flight harmoniously, or more probably the Ancients were impressed by the whistling sound made by their wings. The latter is mentioned in the shorter Homeric Hymn to Apollo.[44]

'Phoebus of thee ever the swan sings with clear voice to the lilt of his beating wings.'

Again the Chorus in the *Birds*[45] describes how of swans 'as they clatter their wings together praising Apollo, when they settle on the bank by Ebrus' stream, through an aery cloud came the cry.'

In addition to innumerable poetic references both Plato and Dionysius refer to the swan's song and the bird's mystical relationship with Apollo. In the *Phaedo*[46] Socrates observes to his grieving companions 'You seem to think that I am less of a prophet than the swans who, when they realize that they have to die, though accustomed to sing even before, then most give way to song, rejoicing that they are about to set out to join the god whom they serve.' He also dreamed of a swan before Plato became his pupil.[47]

'The ravines and crags re-echo to their singing', says Dionysius,[48] 'and we know that these are the most musical of all birds and call them sacred to Apollo. But they don't sing a dirge, as the halcyons do, but sweetly and melodiously, for all the world as though they were playing flutes or harps.'

The swans travelled to and from the north, the fabled land of the Hyperboreans, whom Apollo was said to visit during his three months' annual absence from Delphi. They were said to visit his temple there and sing in his honour as Aelian[49] described. 'When they celebrate the traditional rites at the appropriate season to the aforesaid deity there fly down from what are known as the Rhipaean mountains clouds of swans beyond counting. They circle the temple as though they were purifying it by their flight, then they descend into the temple precinct, which is of vast extent and outstanding beauty. Now when the choir hymn the god with their music and the harpists accompany the chorus with an harmonious air, the swans join in the chanting never singing a false note or out of tune, but as though taking the note from the conductor they sing in unison with the natives who are trained in the holy carols. Then when the hymn is ended the aforementioned, so to term them, winged chorus, after performing the traditional services in honour of the god and singing and celebrating his praises the livelong day take their departure.'

According to the lyric poet Alcaeus[50] (sixth century BC) swans transported Apollo to and from Delphi to the land of the Hyper-

boreans, and circled Delos seven times singing at the time of his birth. Their whiteness reflected Apollo's ritual purity.

Though never his sacred bird the raven was associated with Apollo in the myth of Coronis, for which see chap. XXI. Even sparrows[51] were regarded as being under the god's protection at Branchidae in Anatolia and when a certain Aristodicus robbed the nests in the temple he was sharply reminded that they were Apollo's suppliants. Aelian[52] states that a man called Atarbes was actually put to death by the Athenians for killing a sparrow belonging to Asclepius. Apollo Sarpedonios[53] was credited with ridding the Cilician countryside of a plague of locusts when in answer to the people's prayers a huge flock of rose-coloured starlings arrived and devoured the insects.

Aphrodite's antecedents were oriental and among the attributes which she inherited from the east were pigeons or doves. They are not mentioned in association with the goddess in the earlier authorities. However archaic statuettes[54] of the goddess are figured holding doves. Curiously it is Athena and Hera who assume dove form in Homer.[55] One of Aphrodite's chief centres of worship was Eryx in Sicily, where the goddess' annual departure for Libya was celebrated at a time when local movements of the dove population was in force.

'In Eryx in Sicily,' says Aelian,[56] 'they hold a festival which the people of Eryx and the inhabitants of Sicily in general term the festival of Embarkation. The reason why the festival is so called is because they say that Aphrodite leaves there at this time for Libya. They also infer this from the following occurrence.

'There is an enormous number of doves there. Well they suddenly disappear and the people of Eryx say that they have gone away to escort the goddess. For they talk of doves as being the pets of Aphrodite and everyone believes the tale. When nine days have passed a single bird of outstanding beauty is seen winging in from the sea-route to Libya, quite different from the others in a flock and of a rosy hue, just as Anacreaon of Teos somewhere describes Aphrodite as "roseate". And you would say it was like gold, for this is the same goddess as Homer describes as "golden". The rest of the doves follow in clouds, and a second festival known as the "Return" is celebrated by the people of Eryx, and takes its name from this event.'

Turtle doves were sacred to the Fates and Furies and white ones to Aphrodite and Demeter.[57]

What part doves played in the operation of the oracle of Zeus at Dodona is uncertain.[58] Possibly they were associated with Aphrodite

or her mother Dione, who was worshipped there as Zeus' consort. The authorities are confused, for though the prophetic oak appears to have been the original feature, the priestesses were known as 'Doves'[59]. Doves were in some sense sacred to Zeus himself, since they supplied the god with ambrosia and fed him while an infant in the Cretan cave,[60] where his mother Rhea had hidden him away from Cronus, his cannibalistic sire.

Aphrodite was also associated with the swan. The famous representation of the goddess by the Pistoxenus painter riding on a swan has already been mentioned in connection with the sparrow (p. 29).

Sappho[61] refers vaguely to the goddess being drawn by *strouthoi* – sparrows or birds.

'And birds twain fair and swift beating their wings quickly bore you from heaven through the mid-sky to the dark earth.'

Athenaeus[62] took the poetess literally, interpreting *strouthoi* as 'sparrows', which were a by-word for lust.

The 'sparrows' in question were, if not quite certainly, presumably swans which were, at least in later literature,[63] generally regarded as her traditional birds. In the *Birds* the goddess is associated with the coot – *phalaris*. Presumably Aristophanes is making a joke, playing on the resemblance of the word to 'phallos'.

The peacock was Hera's sacred bird. According to Athenaeus[65] Menodotus of Samos (third century BC) wrote a work on the goddess' famous temple in the island. In it he reported, 'The peacocks are Hera's sacred birds and probably they were first produced and bred in Samos and from there were transferred to lands outside, like the cocks in Persia and the so-called Birds of Meleager [guinea fowl] in Aetolia. The comic poet Antiphanes [fourth century BC] also remarks in a play "In Samos Hera has a golden race of birds, the beauteous and universally admired peacocks." ' It was represented on Samian coins.[66]

The peacock was said to be sacred to the goddess of heaven because the stars in its tail recalled the starry sky[67] (for the myth of Argus see chap. XVIII. For Hera and the cuckoo see chap. XX.)

The cock was sacred to a number of deities including Hermes, Athena, Leto, Demeter and Asclepius.

In Lucian's[68] dialogue of that name the cock surprises a man who complained that it had wakened him by talking with a human voice. 'I am the friend of Hermes,' the bird boasted 'the most loquacious and eloquent of all the gods, and besides I am the comrade and messenger of men.' The association clearly arose between the messenger of

Zeus and the bird which fulfilled the role of time-keeper for men.

Aelian[69] says the cock was sacred to Leto, because it was at her side when she gave birth to Apollo and Artemis. According to (the philosopher) Porphyry,[70] (third century AD) it was sacred to Demeter and her priests abstained from eating its flesh. It was also sacred to Asclepius, the Healer. Socrates'[71] famous last request was 'I owe a cock to Asclepius. See that it is paid.' Artemidorus[72] (second century AD), the writer on dreams, also refers to a man who promised to sacrifice a cock to Asclepius, provided he remained healthy for a year. Cocks were also sacred to Helios[73] and Heracles[74] and white ones to the Moon.[75]

The guinea-fowl was sacred to Artemis, and in Leros[76] in Anatolia the birds wandered freely about her sacred enclosure (see chap. XIX). According to Porphyry[77] the pigeon (*phatta*) was sacred to Persephone (also known as *pherephatta*) because her name meant 'dove-nurturer'. Of lesser attributes the partridge[78] was said to be a 'play-thing' of Zeus and Leto, while the quail[79] and gull[80] were sacred to Heracles and the duck to Poseidon.[81]

Even the jay[82] was said to be sacred to Dionysus.

The ibis[83] was regarded as sacred to Hermes after his identification with the Egyptian Thoth, and the corncrake[84] (*ortygometra*) to Leto owing to her connection with Ortygia (another name for Delos).

CHAPTER XVII

BIRDS IN BRONZE AGE GREECE

Birds assumed a remarkable importance in the Bronze Age art both of Minoan Crete and the Mycenaean mainland during the second millenium BC. Many arresting examples were published by Sir Arthur Evans and his successors, while brilliant new finds are constantly being made.

During his recent excavations at Akroteri on the island of Thera the late Professor Marinatos[1] discovered a number of Minoan artifacts tastefully decorated with elegant swallows. Most striking was a fresco depicting swallows flying singly or in pairs through a landscape of waving lilies.[2] Meanwhile near Knossos in Crete St Alexiou[3] unearthed a jug decorated with large birds, though, as often, it is hard to identify the species. In the same area also discovered a gold ring, of a type familiar to Evans, incised with a ritual scene which includes a hawk-like bird stooping. Again on the mainland at the Palace of Nestor[4] a fresco, decorated with two blue birds in flight resembling pigeons, has been recently restored.

Of the older and more familiar examples the great partridge and hoopoe fresco discovered by Evans[5] at Knossos in Crete is remarkable for its fidelity to nature. The partridges are chukar partridges (*alectoris chukar*) with red legs, beaks and irises, black eye-stripes and white bibs. The artist has accurately reproduced the habits of feeding birds, glancing inquiringly this way and that and occasionally raising their wings as if about to call. Yet, for some curious reason, he has painted the hoopoe yellow instead of pink, while many other birds are apparently fanciful and decorative.

Some birds appear in intriguing contexts of a religious nature, accompanied by worshippers, divinities and ritual objects like double-axes, shields shaped like the figure of eight, horns, trees and pillars. These, since they represent, as a French savant put it, 'un livre d'images sans texte',[6] have been naturally the subject of considerable controversy and have been thought by some to explain the later Greek concern with augury and the myths about divine or human transformations into birds.

Probably the most intriguing Cretan monument ever discovered

was the sarcophagus dating from late Minoan III (1300–1200 BC) from the villa of Hagia Triada[7] near Phaestus. It appears to represent a funerary ritual of a highly original type. On the one side a bull is being sacrificed, approached by a procession of women, while another woman, presumably a priestess, dressed in a curious animal skirt, stands before the smaller of two shrines. Behind the shrines, the larger of which is decorated with ritual horns and mounted on a kind of step, stands a slender obelisk hafted into a double-axe, upon which perches a remarkable mottled bird. On the other appears the sequel to the sacrifice. A libation is being made of bull's blood. The vase into which the blood is being poured stands between two further obelisks, each of which is crowned with double-axes and a bird. A bird, seemingly of composite nature, with plumes on its head, appears upon one of the smaller ends. Since the Minoans were capable, when they chose, of painting birds with remarkable fidelity, like the swallows and the partridges already mentioned, it has been argued that the birds depicted on the sides of the sarcophagus belonged to certain recognizable species, which might assist in identifying the deity or deities with which they were associated. This was, of course, assuming that the bird familiars considered in the last chapter had their origins in Crete.

Sir Arthur Evans,[8] no expert, thought the birds were woodpeckers, while others identified them with eagles, cuckoos or ravens. The latter was Warde-Fowler's[9] guess, whose views, as an ornithologist, naturally commanded respect. Certainly the silhouettes of the larger birds appear to be corvine, though the smaller more nearly resembles a cuckoo. The significance of the axes on which the birds perch has been widely debated. A. B. Cook[10] regarded them as the tokens of a thunder god, with which he associated ravens as prophets of storm. Jane Harrison,[11] on the other hand, regarded the presence of a cuckoo, whose shape, according to an Argive myth (see chap. xx), Zeus once assumed in order to ravish Hera, as representing 'the bridal of earth and sky'. All this is highly speculative and seems far removed from a sacrifice in honour of the dead. It is possible that the birds' presence represents a touch of realism, since ravens and such commonly scavenged at sacrifices. But it is also possible that they were regarded as the epiphanies of the deities associated with the sacred axes on which they perch. Nilsson[12] notably advanced this view, regarding the birds which appeared in sacral Minoan and Mycenaean contexts as deities in bird form, and the direct ancestors of the classical Greek gods who still possessed the power of assuming the shape of birds whenever it suited them.

Certainly the presence of birds in ritual Bronze Age scenes is hard to account for except on religious grounds.

A bronze tablet from the Psychro Cave, and dated by Evans[13] to Late Minoan I (1500–1400 BC, i.e. roughly coeval with the XVIIIth Dynasty of Egypt) depicts two human figures together with a conglomerate of natural phenomena including a tree, as well as various religious objects arranged in no apparent order. A male figure, naked to the waist and wearing a short kirtle, stands before a pair of horns in an attitude of adoration. A curious bean-like object, which may be intended to represent a human ear, occupies the space above a life-like fish, while an accurately drawn ring dove perches on a tree. The design includes other strange features and objects, including celestial bodies. That the scene is religious there is no reason to doubt and the dove has been thought to indicate the presence of a deity. Since the dove was sacred to Aphrodite A. B. Cook[14] suggested that the deity in question was a prototype goddess.

A series of figurines was found in the so-called 'Shrine of the Double Axes' at Knossos, two of which have birds on their heads. A male figurine, holding a bird, is evidently intended to represent a votary.[15] The bird on the head motif is of special interest in connection with Aristophanes'[16] reference to statues of deities with birds on their heads. The motif recurs on two pieces of gold leaf found in the third Shaft Grave at Mycenae.[17] A naked goddess is shown with a bird in the act of flight on her head and two other birds flying away, as if from her side, and a second goddess also bird crowned. Similar in type is a large female idol found at Gazi[18] in Crete, dating from late Minoan III B (1200 BC). It wears a pair of ritual horns, and has two birds on its head.

During the Bronze Age pillars and stones appear to have been regarded as sacred objects. Sometimes a bird is represented perching on a pillar, like the eagles mentioned in the previous chapter which crowned the columns facing the altars of Zeus Lykaios, or those guarding the Delphic omphalos. Birds were also represented in association with trees in Bronze Age art and the relationship between the bird and the pillar or tree is disputed. Curiously enough the motif occurs in a Palaeolithic painting at Lascaux,[19] though in the context of a beast hunt it may be purely naturalistic. The difficulty is to decide whether such birds are intended to represent the epiphany of a deity, in this case of the pillar or tree, or whether their presence is fortuitous and without religious significance.

A highly intriguing scene on a gold ring from Tiryns[20] dating from late Helladic II (1450–1400 BC) shows a goddess seated upon a throne. She is being approached by four daemons or men wearing animal masks, bearing libations. Behind her a large bird perches on a pillar or stump. The bird could be the goddess' familiar, like Athena's owl, though its significance has been disputed.

A gold ring from the necropolis at Phaestus,[21] dating from late Minoan I (1500–1400 BC) shows a scene of worship in which a naked female figure clasps a tree before an altar, while a male worshipper bows over a stone. A second altar containing a sacred stone appears behind the worshipper, while a bird is shown flying between. The bird is remarkable in that it possesses an elaborate tail, like a peacock's. However any connection with Hera must be discounted since, as we have seen, the peacock did not reach Athens until the fifth century BC and is unlikely to have been known in Crete at an earlier date. Whatever the bird's species the Swedish scholar Persson[22] supposed that it was associated with the deity in the tree.

A curious terracotta group was discovered at Hagia Triada consisting of a female figure on a swing.[23] It dates from late Minoan II (1450–1400 BC). The two supporting columns which flank the swing are crowned with birds. The swing recalls the Attic festival of the Aiora[24] and it has been thought that the birds represented the deity in the pillars.

Among still more enigmatic examples are a terracotta model of a female lyre-player[25] confronted with a dove, which could represent her epiphany, while a polychrome vessel shaped like a dove may have been employed in ritual.[26] It is only one of a series of such vessels and bird figurines, found for the most part in house sanctuaries, whose precise significance is obscure.

Swallows, as has been seen, were popular with Minoan artists. A seal impression from Knossos actually appears to represent some spring ritual.[27] A female figure holds a wand or string, which is bent at one end and appears to be attached to a swallow, while a second swallow approaches, as if lured by the other.

Even at the end of the Minoan era birds still appear along with religious objects on artifacts of a more conventional design. A larnax[28] from late Minoan III B (1200 BC) depicts a bird flying between two bulls.

A certain number of transitional forms occur which help to bridge the gap between the Mycenaean period and that of classical Greece,

suggesting that birds retained religious significance even in later times. A series of curious figures, resembling the bird crowned goddess from Gazi, were found at Karphi,[29] a mountain retreat to which a party of Minoans seem to have retired in order to escape the cataclysm which destroyed their civilization. They have been assigned to the period 1100–900 BC and represent an intermediate stage between Bronze Age and Greek art.

More important are the various representations of proto-Artemis, possibly a direct inheritor of Bronze Age conceptions, whom Studniczka[30] christened, borrowing Homer's phrase, 'Mistress of the Beasts'. The latter appears on the Grächwil hydria, already mentioned, as well as on terracottas from Corcyra[31] and archaic heraldic designs.[32]

Bird figurines pierced for mounting on terracotta trees and dating from the Geometric period of Greek art (900–700 BC) have been found at Knossos.[33] Birds also occur in association with tripods on the necks of Attic Geometric vases from the Cerameicus,[34] the ancient graveyard at Athens, and upon a lid from Knossos[35] which dates from the late Geometric period. Eagle figurines have been found on tripod handles at Delphi[36] and many other unattached bird figurines exist.[37] The Bird and Pillar motif recurs on Athenian white-figured lekythoi of the fourth century BC. An example, now in Berlin,[38] shows a woman standing before a grave pillar crowned with acanthus leaves upon which a bird is perching. The significance of the bird is every whit as enigmatic as in the Bronze Age examples. Fairbanks[39] suggested that it may be simply a pet brought as an offering to the dead person, or that its presence merely indicates that the tomb was situated in open country. Neither explanation is satisfactory and it seems at least possible that the bird still retains something of the mystical character which has been observed in the Bronze Age examples.

The presence of Bronze Age religious objects at important cult centres in Greece suggests that such places were formerly associated with the Minoan-Mycenaean religion. Votive axes have been found at Delphi[40] and Ephesus,[41] while the Keraton at Delos[42] possessed obvious affinities with the sacral horns which also survived in the horned altars at Dreros[43] and the Neolithic examples from Çatal Hüyük.[44] Again the resemblance between the tree-worshipping scenes of Bronze Age art and later Greek beliefs is so striking that it can hardly be ignored. The examples quoted by Botticher[45] and Mannhardt[46] show that the Greek reverence for trees and sacred groves was due to no mere poetical or aesthetic consideration, but derived from a general belief that trees

were the abodes of spirits and sometimes of gods. Now trees could be prophetic, like the oak at Dodona, as presumably were the birds which dwelt in their branches.[47] The relationship of birds to the tree cult is not clear in the Bronze Age examples, but it seems probable that birds were regarded as sharing in the divine nature of trees and as representing the epiphanies of the deities to which the trees were sacred. Such views appear to have been inherited by the classical Greeks, who continued to hold birds in awe as omens and on occasion as deities disguised.

CHAPTER XVIII

GODS IN BIRD FORM

Since the Cretans and Greeks of the Bronze Age appear to have regarded birds as the epiphanies of deities, it is not surprising that divine bird transformations should occur in the literature which is nearest in time to the Bronze Age, and appears to inherit from it, *viz* the epics of Homer. At the same time it is often difficult to decide whether an actual transformation is intended or whether a particular deity's movements or activities are merely being likened to those of a bird. In *Iliad* Book VII[1] Athena and Apollo are said to resemble vultures when they sit and watch the battle from a tree.

'Then the twain, Athena and Apollo of the Silver Bow, sat on a high oak of Zeus who bears the Aegis, like vulture birds delighting in the heroes.'

In this instance it seems that we are required to visualize the two deities as having actually assumed the shape of vultures, for as Leaf[2] pertinently observed 'there is certainly no gain of dignity in supposing the gods to sit in human form at the top of a high tree.' HoweverCastor and Pollux were observed by a seer sitting in a wild pear in Messenia.[3]

Homer, as usual in such instances, chooses a bird which suits the context, for it is characteristic of vultures to squat on trees in the vicinity of corpses or those like to perish. He must have frequently observed them behaving so in Anatolia, as they still do both in Turkey and on the Greek mainland today. The example quoted is untypical in as much as the majority of transformations take place at the moment of a god's arrival or departure when a bird's sudden appearance apparently convinced those present that a deity had been present all the time.

So after addressing Telemachus in the guise of Mentor, Athena departs in the form of a lammergeyer.[4]

'So speaking owl-eyed Athena took her departure in the guise of a lammergeyer [*phene*]. And awe possessed everyone who saw it including the old man since he had actually seen it with his own eyes.'

The transformation fills the beholders with *thambos* – awe, a word practically confined in Homer to experiences connected with the gods.[5] There is less doubt about the nature of the transformation here, for the

word used to express likeness (*eidomene*) is regularly used in epic to express actual corporeal change e.g. in the first book[6] of the *Odyssey* when Athena appears 'in the guise of Mentes' or in Book VI[7] 'in the guise of Dymas' daughter'. Similarly in the second book[8] of the *Iliad* Iris 'made herself like Polites in voice' which implies that she appeared in the guise of Polites.

A lammergeyer is an impressive bird at any time and may or could be seen in any mountainous region of Greece and even in the close vicinity of towns. It is also the largest of the raptorial birds, so its sudden taking wing must have struck the onlookers that a deity was present when Mentor made his speech, precisely as seems to have occurred during the Bronze Age.

In an even more striking example, reminiscent of the transformation of Apollo and Athena into vultures, the latter watches the destruction of the Suitors from a beam in the likeness of a swallow.

'She flew up and sat on a beam of the smoky hall like a swallow in appearance.'[9]

Here the transformation is perfectly explicit and the goddess chooses what must have been a familiar epiphany of the Mycenaean house goddess, as Nilsson[10] supposed her origin to be. Certainly a swallow was virtually the only bird which could have been found squatting on a beam inside the hall. So in the first book of the *Odyssey* Athena visits Telemachus in the guise of Mentes and flies away 'up the chimney'.[11] If, as seems likely, the goddess took the form of a swallow the description makes excellent sense.

In some passages the transformation of a deity into a bird is only half complete, though the underlying conception that deities could and did assume bird form is latent in the descriptions. When Ino-Leucothea visits Odysseus adrift on the raft, 'She dived into the heaving deep like a shearwater [*aithuia*], and a black wave covered her.'[12]

In the same book of the *Odyssey*[13] Hermes is likened to a sea-bird fishing when he sets out to visit Calypso.

'He glided along the wave top like a sea-bird fishing between the dire hollows of the unharvested sea and dips its broad wings in the surge. Like it Hermes skimmed the endless waves.'

The bird is called *laros* but cannot be a gull because gulls scavenge and do not fish. The action suits the shearwater and the transformation is all but complete. Hermes, being a god, was not limited by the actions of a sea-bird, but if the context suited that particular epiphany then he behaved for the nonce as if he was.

Again the departure of Athena at her father's bidding in *Iliad*, Book XIX[14] is compared to that of a great bird of prey taking wing.

'So speaking he urged Athena, already fain to do his bidding. And she leaped through the air of heaven like a long-winged lammergeyer with a shrill scream.' In this passage the bird is said to be a *harpe*,[15] whereas in the passage in the *Odyssey* the bird is called a *phene*, both of which were applied to the lammergeyer. The goddess in fact is a lammergeyer from Mount Olympus as far as any mortal watcher is concerned. Similarly the departure of Achilles' goddess mother Thetis, also from Olympus, is likened to a falcon in *Iliad* Book XVIII.[16]

'And she like a falcon swooped from snowy Olympus, bringing the shining armour from Hephaestus.'

Apollo too stoops from Ida like a falcon at Zeus' command. 'So he spake and did not disobey his father but stooped like a falcon, the swift dove-slayer, which is the swiftest of birds.'[17]

In all the last three examples mountain-dwelling gods assume the shapes of mountain-dwelling birds. Other passages in Homer impart a bird-like motion to the gods, even though no bird is mentioned.

In the first book[18] of the *Iliad* Thetis, a sea-goddess, whose epiphany would be presumably a sea-bird, leaps into the sea like a diver.

'Then she dived into the sea-depths from gleaming Olympus.' Iris, Zeus' messenger, behaves in a similar fashion in the last book.

'So he spoke and storm-swift Iris rose to take his message and leaped into the dark sea between Samos and rocky Imbros. And the depths re-echoed.'[19]

She is, in fact, a diver, tern, shearwater or whatever and makes an audible splash when she enters the sea. Even such phrases as 'she went and shot from the peaks of Olympus'[20] suggest bird motion, for the natural analogies for gods in flight were practically limited to birds. At the same time in view of more explicit transformations there is always the hint of an epiphany. This is probably true even when Hera and Athena are likened to doves,[21] though the simile may be intended merely to suggest women strutting with importance. Aristotle's[22] comment on the passage is dry and prosaic.

'He [i.e. Homer] cleverly likened to doves those who were anxious to conceal their designs. For doves leave no traces.'

Both A. B. Cook[23] and M. P. Nilsson[24] considered that the lines represented a true transformation on the grounds that doves had sacral associations in the *Odyssey*, where they are said to bring ambrosia to Zeus.

Some passages involving transformations are puzzling and allusive.

The comparison of Poseidon to a falcon in *Iliad* Book XIII[25] is, at first sight, a pure simile.

'He took his departure in flight like a swift falcon, which rising from a huge precipitous cliff sets out to pursue another bird across the plain. So Poseidon the Earth-Shaker sped away from them.'

But the following lines are very curious. In this instance, as so often, the presence of the deity is revealed by its bird-like departure, except that Ajax draws attention to its legs.

'This is not Calchas, the prophetic augur. For I recognized the prints of his talons and tarsus which he left behind as he took his leave.'[26]

This enigmatic phrase has been much discussed. It has even been suggested that the basic notion is similar to the superstition that the footprints of spirits which have assumed human form are turned in the reverse direction.[27] But such medieval superstitions are far removed from Homer and it seems more natural to suppose that the poet is merely referring to the footprints which a raptorial bird left in the sand after take-off. Possibly there was something more, like the gait which 'revealed' to Aeneas, that his mother Venus 'was a goddess in truth'.[28] Poseidon did take bird form or rather the two Ajaxes imagined that he had done so when, as they were listening to Calchas, they suddenly spied a falcon taking wing.

In order to persuade Zeus to make love to her Hera sought the assistance of Sleep, whom she found on the island of Lemnos, perched in a tree.

'There he sat covered by the fir branches, like the shrill-voiced bird which the gods call the '*chalkis* of the mountains' and men the *kymindis*.'[29] The meanings of neither *chalkis* nor *kymindis* are known (chap. VII). Since the former title was employed by the gods it had usually been taken as pre-Greek. The ancient commentator begged the question by connecting *chalkis* with *chalkos* bronze and so suggesting that the *kymindis* was of a bronze hue. Aristophanes[30] mentions the *chalkis* and places it in his list between the vulture and the eagle which suggests that he regarded it as a bird of prey. Aristotle[31] implies the same. The *chalkis* was rare and no bigger than a falcon, while the *Suda* defined it as 'a kind of bird or owl'. It would be natural in the context to refer the bird to some nocturnal species like an owl or nightjar. Schliemann[32] had no doubts about its identity.

'There is also a small bird in the plain with a beautiful plumage, which M. Burnouf holds to be identical with the Homeric Cymindis, called Chalcis by the gods', though he does not say what it was. It was not perhaps inevitable that Sleep should have been visualized as a bird,

but since the gods could assume bird form other divinities were believed to do the same.

It is notable that the gods rarely appear in their own shape in Homer, except when consorting with one another. Generally speaking the gods were too awful to reveal themselves direct to men and even Achilles, who was partly divine, was appalled by Athena's visible presence. So when Ino appears to Odysseus she assumes the guise of a shearwater, for the unexpected appearance of a bird at sea usually indicates the proximity of land and it is this practical consideration which finally persuades the hero to quit the raft. Her words, of course, reflect the conflict which is going on in Odysseus' mind, and the inspired nature of the process is confirmed by the sea-bird's sudden arrival, which is in the nature of a good omen. The departure of Athena 'up the chimney' is of a similar nature. The presence of a god could be inferred from some internal crisis often coincident with the sudden appearance of a bird. The importance given to bird transformations in such cases may well derive from the Bronze Age view that a god's presence was indicated by the presence of a bird.

In Homer the gods seem to prefer to take the form of birds of prey. This may be simply because they were believed to dwell on the peaks of Olympus, Ida or Gargarus, the natural habitats of raptorial birds. At the same time such birds are powerful, swift and deadly monarchs of the sky, well suited to personify deity. Raptorial birds also scavenge at sacrifices and it is at least a reasonable inference from the Bronze Age evidence that such were specially regarded as emissaries from the gods.

Many myths were current in post-Homeric times about the assumption of bird form by gods for some amatory or other purpose. Best known was the myth that Zeus took the shape of a swan in order to excite the admiration of Tyndareus' wife Leda.[33] As a result of this amour Leda is said to have given birth to an egg from which emerged Helen of Troy and the twin heroes Castor and Pollux. According to another version[34] Leda produced two eggs, from one of which Castor and Pollux were hatched and from the other Helen and Agamemnon's future wife Clytaemnestra. According to Euripides,[35] the oldest authority for the myth of Zeus and Leda, the god in swan form was escaping from an eagle, his own emblem!

'A tale there is', says Helen in the play of that name 'how Zeus flew to my mother Leda, taking the shape of a swan, and gained her by stealth, escaping a pursuing eagle, if the tale be true.'

In a parallel myth Zeus fell in love with the goddess Nemesis

(Retribution) who assumed many shapes in her efforts to escape him and finally that of a goose.

'Whereupon Zeus changed himself into a swan', says Apollodorus[36] 'and so mated with her. As the result of this amour she gave birth to an egg, which a shepherd found in a wood and presented to Leda. To keep it safe Leda put it in a chest, and when in due course Helen was hatched she brought her up as her own daughter.' This version was known to Sappho[37] (sixth century BC).

'They say, I hope the story's true, that one day Leda found an egg of hyacinthine blue.'

The three monstrous and aged Graeae were 'swan-shaped' according to Aeschylus,[38] while swan-maidens occur in Irish folklore.[39] But Greek beliefs about divine transformations into birds appear to have derived from the Bronze Age. Eggs, of course, have always been regarded as mysterious objects, for though seemingly inanimate they secretly harbour life. The belief in a cosmic egg was found in Greece, as well as in the orient, and the puritan followers of Orpheus believed that Chaos produced an egg from which emerged their mystic deity Phanes.[40] Aristophanes[41] changed the story and made Love emerge from the egg and so become the father of the birds.

According to a note on a line in a poem of Theocritus[42] where a woman observes to her companion:

'Women know everything, including how Zeus married Hera'; the ancient commentator says that in order to take advantage of Hera Zeus transformed himself into a cuckoo and lay in wait for her in the neighbourhood of Mount Thornax (in the Argolid). He next caused a storm to brew and when the goddess was moved to pity by his bedraggled appearance and attempted to warm him inside her dress he repaid her kindness by raping her (see chap. xx).

Zeus was also said to have taken the form of an eagle in order to snatch Ganymedes,[43] the handsome son of Tros, to be his cup-bearer on Olympus, though not in any early authority. Myths were also extant of his changing himself into a pigeon[44] in order to mate with Pthia and a hoopoe[45] to win Lamia, while Asterie,[46] the Titaness, flung herself into the sea in the likeness of a quail in order to escape his attentions.

When Zeus fell in love with Io (for the part played by Iynx see the following chapter) and transformed her into a heifer to elude Hera's notice, the goddess, undeceived, put the many-eyed monster Argus to guard her. But Hermes, acting under Zeus' instructions, slew Argus and Hera put his eyes in the peacock's train.[47]

According to Antoninus Liberalis[48] during the battle between the gods and the monster Typhon Apollo and Hermes changed themselves in terror into a kite and ibis.

However, not only gods, but mortals too, underwent avian transformations.

CHAPTER XIX

MEN IN BIRD FORM

Fancied resemblances between a bird's name and that of some hero or heroine doubtless accounted for many bird transformations, like the Birds of Meleager, Memnon and Diomedes.

Birds of Meleager

The following is the version given by Antoninus Liberalis,[1] the author of a collection of *Metamorphoses*, based on various Hellenistic sources.

'Oeneus, son of Portheus, himself the son of Ares (god of War) was king of Calydon. Althaea, daughter of Thestius, bore him Meleager (as well as other sons and daughters). One day while he was sacrificing firstlings to the gods for the country's prosperity he forgot to include Artemis. In revenge the goddess sent a wild boar which ravaged the fields and killed many of the inhabitants. So Meleager and the sons of Thestius summoned all the bravest heroes in Greece to come and hunt the beast and they duly came and killed it. Meleager distributed the flesh among the heroes, but claimed the head and skin as his own mead of honour. However Artemis' anger increased still more now that they had killed her sacred boar and she spread discord among the participants. As a result the sons of Thestius and the other Curetes (the people of Thestius) laid hands on the skin claiming a half share in the mead of honour. Meleager retrieved it by force and killed Thestius' sons (his own uncles). This resulted in a war between the Curetes and the men of Calydon. But Meleager refused to join in, blaming his mother for cursing him for killing her brothers. However at the critical moment when the Curetes were on the point of capturing the city Meleager's wife Cleopatra persuaded him to save Calydon. So he went and fought against the army of the Curetes, but died himself in the battle when his mother burned the fire-brand which the Fates had given her. You see they had destined him to live as long as the fire-brand burned. Meleager's other brothers all died in the battle. Meleager's death plunged the Calydonians into the deepest grief and his sisters never ceased mourning round his tomb until Artemis touched them with her magic wand and changed them into birds, settling them on the island of Leros and calling them *meleagrines* [i.e. guinea-fowl].'

Other versions of the myth introduce the romantic complication of the huntress Atalanta, who was said to have given the boar its first wound and with whom Meleager fell in love, but it has no bearing on the myth of the birds. Neither has Homer's[2] account of the myth.

Guinea-fowls were foreign birds, so *meleagris* was a foreign word, possibly connected with the Semitic *melek*[3] – lord. They were kept on the island of Leros,[4] off the coast of Caria in Anatolia (as peacocks were kept on Samos) and were associated with Artemis who had a temple there. They were also kept, according to the lexicographer Hesychius,[5] on the Acropolis at Athens (where Artemis also had a precinct) and were sacred to Isis in Tithorea.[6] Aelian[7] referred to the Birds' characteristic call. 'They serenade Meleager and even mention that they are his kin.' Pliny[8] says they fought round the hero's tomb in Boeotia and were trained as fighting cocks. It is not difficult to see how a bird which appeared to cry *Meleg meleg* (interpreted in English as 'Go back, go back') became associated with the legend of the hero in question.

The *Suda*[9] knew of another legend in which the companions of a maiden called Iocallis at Lerna were changed into guinea-fowl.

Birds of Memnon

Memnon, king of the Ethiopians, came to assist Priam during the siege of Troy. After slaying several heroes, including Antilochus, Achilles slew him in turn and buried him on Antilochus' pyre. His mother Eos, the goddess of Dawn, begged Zeus to make her son immortal and a cloud of birds rose from the funeral embers. After circling the pyre they started fighting and fell back among the ashes as a sacrifice to the dead. So Apollodorus.[10] According to another version preserved by Servius,[11] the ancient commentator on Virgil, the birds, like Meleager's sisters, were Memnon's women-folk transformed out of pity by the gods.

According to Pausanias[12] (see chap. x) the birds paid annual visits to Memnon's tomb, sweeping and sprinkling it with water from the river Aesopus. The legend apparently grew out of the mock-fights of ruffs, which were observed near the Hellespont in the vicinity of the tumulus traditionally associated with the hero.

Birds of Diomedes

After the fall of Troy the heroes set out for home and either met with disaster on the way, or their home-coming was unhappy. Diomedes was no exception. Antoninus[13] gives the story as follows: 'After the

capture of Troy Diomedes returned to Argos, accused his wife of infidelities and left for Calydon in Aetolia. There he slew Agrius and his children and handed the throne to Oeneus, his grandfather. He then set out to return to Argos, but was carried by a storm into the Ionian Sea. When Daunius, king of the Daunians, heard of his arrival, he requested him to help him in his war against the Messapians, promising him in return a share in his land and his daughter's hand in marriage. Diomedes accepted, drew up his troops, routed the Messapians, and received the grant of land which he distributed among his companions the Dorians. He had two sons, Diomedes and Amphinomus by Daunius' daughter. He died of old age in the country of the Daunians and the Dorians celebrated the last rites in his honour in the island which they called the island of Diomedes. As for them they cultivated the land they had received alongside that of the king and, through their great experience in agricultural matters, produced rich crops. When Daunius died they succumbed to the plots of the Illyrian barbarians, who after casting covetous eyes on their land surprised and slew all the Dorians in their island while they were engaged in offering funeral sacrifices. At Zeus' command the bodies of the Greeks disappeared and their souls were changed into birds. Even today whenever a Greek ship puts into harbour the birds come and greet it, but fly from an Illyrian ship and all disappear from the island.'

Aelian[14] describes the same phenomenon: 'There is an island called Diomedeia, which is inhabited by many "herons". These, they say, neither harm the barbarians nor approach them. But if a Greek ship puts in they approach in accordance with some divine privilege, joining wings like hands to welcome and embrace the newcomers. And if the Greeks touch them they do not withdraw, but display no fear and suffer it and when they sit down fly into their lap, as though invited to dine. They are said to be the companions of Diomedes and to have taken part with him in the war against Troy and though they changed their original appearance to that of birds, yet retain their Greek nature and love of Greece.'

Tereus, Procne and Philomela

One of the strangest of all Greek myths concerns Tereus. Many versions were current in ancient times, but the basic story is given by the mythographer Apollodorus:[15] 'Pandion (who succeeded Erichthonius as king of Athens) married Zeuxippe, daughter of his mother's sister and begat Procne and Philomela and the twins Erechtheus and Butes.

When war broke out against Labdacus, through a border dispute, he summoned the aid of Tereus, son of Ares, from Thrace. The outcome being successful he gave Tereus his daughter Procne to wife. Tereus had by her a son Itys, but fell in love with Philomela, raped her and pretending that Procne had died hid her in the country. He then married Philomela and cut out her tongue. But she wove letters on a robe and by this means apprised Procne of her own misfortunes. Procne sought out her sister and after murdering Itys, boiled him and served him up for Tereus to eat. She then decamped with her sister. When Tereus learned what had happened he snatched up an axe and pursued them. The pair were overtaken at Daulia in Phocis and prayed to the gods to change them into birds. Whereupon Procne became a nightingale and Philomela a swallow. Tereus too was changed into a bird and became a hoopoe.'

The peculiar savagery of the myth is intriguing, though cannibal feasts occur elsewhere in Greek myth.[16] That there was some historical foundation for the story seems possible since Thucydides[17] took it seriously, making the point that Daulis was formerly inhabited by Thracians. He also appears to have known about the myth of the bird transformations since he observes that the poets 'called the nightingale the Daulian bird'.

The story was clearly very old since it was known to Homer,[18] Hesiod[19] and Sappho,[20] while Sophocles[21] wrote a play called *Tereus*, of which a fragment is preserved by Aristotle (who attributes it in error to Aeschylus).

'This bird the hoopoe, as witness to his crimes, he has given dappled plumage and has revealed the proud bird of the rocks in all his panoply; who when spring comes displays the wing of a hawk with white plumage. For he will present two forms in youth and maturity, though the issue of one womb. When autumn returns at the time when the corn turns yellow a dappled wing will clothe him anew. But ever moved by hate he will depart for another home, and will go away towards forests and lonely peaks.'

The reference to Tereus' twy-form as a hawk in youth and later a hoopoe is obscure, but the hoopoe's preference for remote places is attributed, in true Greek fashion, to Tereus' consciousness of crime (and hatred of women) and desire to hide from men's eyes. Aeschylus[22] also, in the *Suppliant Maidens*, suggests that the hoopoe (like the cuckoo) became a hawk, a version followed by the Roman mythographer Hyginus.[23]

At some stage and by someone unknown the inane twittering of the swallow as if it had lost its tongue, the nightingale's song – 'Itu, itu!' and the cry of the hoopoe – 'pou-pou' – where, where? were explained by this fable. Such at least was Pausanias'[24] view, according to whom Tereus committed suicide at Megara, where the hoopoe first appeared, while Procne and Philomela died of grief at Athens. For some reason the Roman poets[25] reversed the roles of Procne and Philomela, so that the former became the swallow and the latter the nightingale, instead of vice versa.

Antoninus'[26] curious account of the Tereus myth will be discussed in the next chapter. His versions are of special interest since many of them derive from the *Ornithogonia* – Generation of Birds – by a certain Boios, known to the antiquarian Philochorus (fourth–third century BC) who apparently adopted this sobriquet from a traditional Delphic prophetess of uncertain date called Boio.[27]

Hawk

Hierax[28] was a pious Thracian, who, when the Teucrians were visited by a famine and ravaged by a sea-monster sent by Poseidon, supplied them with food. This further angered the god, who had punished the Teucrians for forgetting to sacrifice to him, and he changed Hierax into a hawk. So henceforth he became as hateful to other birds as he had formerly been popular with men. The myth is plainly aetiological, explaining the emnity between birds and the hawk.

Lammergeyer

Similarly Aigypios[29] was renowned for piety and fell in love with a widow called Timandra. Timandra's son Neophron objected to the liaison and made Aigypios' mother Boulis his mistress in revenge. When Aigypios came to visit Timandra he succeeded by a stratagem in substituting Boulis and so caused Aigypios to commit incest. When Boulis discovered the deception she seized a sword to blind her son before committing suicide. Zeus in pity transformed all the victims into birds. Aigypios became a lammergeyer, Neophron an Egyptian vulture and Boulis a sea-bird, destined to live on the eyes of fish, birds or snakes, while Timandra became a nightjar. From that time forth these birds were never seen together. The myth is also aetiological and borrows from the tragedy of Oedipus.

Eagle

The myth of the pious man recurs in that of Periphas,[30] who was so highly revered that men raised temples in his honour. Zeus destroyed the temples with a thunder-bolt, but Apollo interceded on Periphas' behalf. Zeus surprised Periphas making love to his wife and changed him into an eagle. His wife begged to suffer a similar fate and was duly changed into a lammergeyer (*phene*). In return for his piety Periphas was made king of all the birds and granted the privilege of approaching Zeus' throne. The eagle was naturally associated with kings and, according to Plato,[31] Agamemnon chose to be reincarnated as an eagle, while the philosopher's own tombstone was crowned with an eagle[32] (see chap. XXII).

Heron, Wagtail, Linnet, Bittern, Lark, Goldfinch, Spoonbill[33]

Autonous, son of Melaneus, married Hippodamia and their children were called Erodios, Anthos, Schoineus, Akanthos and Akanthis (the first two were names for herons, while Schoineus meant Rushman, Akanthos and Akanthis Thorn and Thornette). He kept horses but his land was barren and covered with rushes, bogs and thorns, hence the curious names which he chose for his children. Erodios, the eldest, was fond of horses, but when Anthos drove them out of their favourite pasture they attacked and ate him, while his mother struggled ineffectually to save him and his father, accompanied by a slave, came to the rescue too late. In pity Zeus transformed them all into birds. Autonous became a bittern, because he hesitated (a play on the word *oknos* which means sloth), his wife became a lark, because she struggled to save her son (a play on *korydos* and *koryssomai* to equip oneself for battle) Anthos and Erodios became different kinds of herons, while Rushman became a wagtail, Thorn a linnet and Thornette a goldfinch. Anthos' slave, who had arrived too late with his master, became a spoonbill (?) described as 'smaller than the heron'.

Dabchick, Wryneck, Kestrel, Greenfinch, Goldfinch, Ortolan, Duck, Spotted Woodpecker, Dracontis[34]

The origin of other birds (in this instance derived not from Boios but from a work on *Metamorphoses* by the learned Hellenistic poet Nicander) were explained by similar myths, e.g. when Zeus married Mnemosyne and became the father of the nine Muses the nine daughters of King Pieros of Emathia (the Muses' home was in Pieria) became their rivals

in singing. As a punishment they were changed by the jealous goddesses into the aforementioned birds.

Owls

The myth of the daughters of Minyas also derived from Nicander.[35] When the other women celebrated the rites of Dionysus the daughters of Minyas continued to work. Dionysus himself attempted to persuade them to join the revels in the guise of a young girl. When he failed to persuade them he changed himself into various terrifying shapes. The girls in alarm threw lots into a jar and shook it. Leucippe drew the lot and vowed to offer a victim to the god and, with her sisters' aid, cut her son Hippasos into pieces. They then left their father's house and went out to join the Bacchants, but were turned by Hermes into birds. One became a bat, the second a little owl and the third a long-eared owl. All three fled the light of the sun. The myth owes much to the *Bacchae* of Euripides.

Swan

The myth of Cycnus was also recorded by Nicander.[36] Cycnus was a youth of great beauty. All his lovers left him except Phylius whom he treated with disdain and required to perform certain difficult feats. The first was to kill a lion bare-handed, the second to take some monstrous vultures which were ravaging the land and the third to capture a bull, all of which the lover successfully accomplished. But Phylios had had enough of Cycnus' caprice and the latter promptly drowned himself. His mother also drowned herself in grief and Apollo changed them both into swans.

Diver, Buzzard, Wren, Ichneumon, Dog, Spotted Woodpecker

Some of Antoninus'[37] fables are thin in the extreme. The children of Mounichios who ruled over the Molossians were named Alcander Megaletor, Philaeos and Hyperippe. They were attacked by bandits who fired the building in which they had taken refuge. But Zeus saved them by changing them into birds. Hyperippe became a diver, because she had attempted to escape into the water, while the other two escaped the blaze, Mounichos in the shape of a buzzard, Alcander in that of a wren, Megaletor and Philaeos in the guise of small birds (the 'ichneumon' and the 'dog') while their mother Lelante became a spotted woodpecker.

Owls, Stone-curlew, Night Raven

The myth of Meropis[38] derives again from Boios. Eumelos had three proud children, Byssa, Meropis and Agron. They lived in Cos. They worked hard and their crops prospered, but they never took part in festivals. If anyone invited the girls to attend a sacrifice to Athena their brother said that he had no affection for a goddess with bright eyes since the girls had black eyes. Besides he hated the owl above everything. If they were invited to a feast of Artemis he said he hated the goddess who roamed by night. If to the offering of libations to Hermes he said he could not honour a god who was a thief. In this way they mocked the gods on many occasions. One evening Hermes, Athena and Artemis appeared before them, Athena and Artemis in the guise of maidens and Hermes wearing a shepherd's cloak. He summoned Eumelos and Agron and invited them to a feast – in fact to offer victims with the other shepherds in honour of himself. He also tried to persuade him to send Byssa and Meropis to the grove of Athena and Artemis and to join their contemporaries there. At the mere mention of Athena Meropis began to insult her name and so the goddess transformed her into a little owl. Byssa retained her name of Horned Owl and became the bird of Leucothea (an odd attribution since Leucothea was a sea-goddess). When Agron saw what had happened he seized a spit and ran outside, whereupon Hermes changed him into a stone-curlew. Eumelos cursed Hermes for transforming his son, so the god changed him into a night raven, a bird of ill omen.

Bee-eater

According to Boios[39] Eumelos lived in Thebes and had a son called Botres. Eumelos honoured Apollo, but one day his son ate the brain of a sheep before the beast had been consecrated at the altar. In anger he struck the boy with a brand whereupon he fell and heaved convulsively. His parents were filled with remorse so Apollo transformed the youth into a bee-eater, which still nests beneath the ground, but practises flying.

Lammergeyer, Harpasos, Eagle, Raven, Piphinx, Tit-mouse

A certain Kleinis,[40] a pious man, attempted to sacrifice asses to Apollo in Babylon, following the custom of the Hyperboreans. But the god objected and Kleinis reported the matter to his children by his wife Harpe, Lykios, Ortygios, Harpasos and Artemiche. Lykios and Harpa-

sos persuaded him to continue the sacrifice. Thereupon the asses attacked them and their slaves and began to eat them. Poseidon heard their prayers and transformed Harpe into a lammergeyer and Harpasos into a bird of the same name. Leto and Artemis decided to save Kleinis, Artemiche and Ortygios, because they were innocent of any impiety. Apollo acceded to their request and transformed them all into birds, Kleinis became an eagle, Lykios a raven, Artemiche a piphinx and Ortygios a tit-mouse.

Owl, Martin, Vulture, Nuthatch

Yet again derived from Boios was the story about Polyphonte,[41] who disdained Aphrodite and joined the band of Artemis. Aphrodite in revenge made her fall in love with a bear. Artemis in anger sent all the beasts in pursuit of her so she fled home to her father's house, where she bore two giants, Agrios and Oreios. Ares and Hermes transformed them into birds. Polyphonte became an owl, Oreios a martin, Agrios a vulture, while their slave became a nuthatch.

The myths which derive from Boios share common features, like the pious man or the jealousy of the gods and appear to have been composed in order to produce a mythical explanation for the existence of various birds. The myth about the Robbers,[42] however, differs markedly from the rest and will be discussed in the following chapter.

Partridge

The curious myth of Perdix, son of Daedalus, was known to Sophocles,[43] and appears to be represented in a vase painting of the fifth century B C.[44] Daedalus, the master craftsman, was jealous of his son Perdix because the latter invented the saw on the pattern of the backbone of a fish. In anger Daedalus hurled him from a house-top, but Athena changed him into a partridge.[45]

Ciris, according to the poem in the *Appendix Vergiliana,* was a counterpart to Delilah, who fell in love with Minos, king of Crete and cut off her father Nisus' red lock in order to ensure his defeat. She was changed into a white bird with a red tuft, so perhaps a tern,[46] and eternally pursued by Nisus in the form of a sea-eagle.

According to one version of the myth concerning Zeus and Io, the god was bewitched by Iynx,[47] daughter of Echo and Peitho, and Hera in revenge transformed Iynx into a wryneck, which has been regarded as a love charm ever since.

The myth of Alcyone was known to Homer[48] who gives a highly

allusive account in a long digression about Meleager. The latter's wife Cleopatra was the daughter of Marpessa, for whose hand Apollo and Idas were rivals. Marpessa chose the mortal and styled Cleopatra Alcyone because she had wept like a halcyon when Apollo carried her off before Idas won her back again.

According to another version Alcyone was a daughter of Aeolus,[49] ruler of the winds and married Ceyx (whose name means tern, see chap. VI) son of the Morning Star. They remained happily married until they excited the jealousy of the gods by calling one another Zeus and Hera. So Ceyx was drowned on a voyage to the island of Claros. Alcyone drowned herself and was changed into a halcyon while Ceyx became her mate.

Priam's son the seer Aesacus[50] was said to have pursued Hesperia, who, like Eurydice, was bitten by a snake and died. In his grief the seer tried to commit suicide by drowning himself in the sea and was changed by the gods into a diver. The reckless habits of diving birds seem to have fascinated the Greeks and given rise to colourful myths.

CHAPTER XX

BIRD CULTS

Attempts were made in a former generation by J. Rendel Harris, Sir James Frazer, A. B. Cook, Jane Harrison and others and more recently by Robert Graves and E. A. Armstrong to show that birds were formerly the object of cult in Greece.

Peisthetaerus' claim that the birds were the original rulers of the universe and that the gods had usurped their privileges, were taken very seriously by such authorities. In particular Euelpides' objection that 'Zeus won't easily yield the sceptre to the woodpecker,'[1] was regarded as evidence for the existence in prehistoric times of ritual oak-kings, who were believed, when they died, to assume the form of the woodpeckers which attacked the oak-trees.

'When Euelpides in Aristophanes' *Aves* 480 spoke of Zeus', wrote Cook,[2] ' "as soon destined to restore the sceptre to the woodpecker" it was no mere flight of fancy but a genuine folk-belief.' In support of this view he quoted the curious version of the Tereus myth, in which Polytechnus replaces Tereus, preserved by Antoninus Liberalis[3] and derived from Boios.

'Pandareos lived in the neighbourhood of Ephesus, where there is a steep escarpment near the city. Demeter had given him the gift of never being able to overload his stomach no matter how much he ate. Pandareos had a daughter called Aedon [Nightingale]. He gave her in marriage to Polytechnos [Craftsman] a carpenter who lived at Colophon in Lydia. For a long time they lived happily together, but only had one child, Itys. As long as they reverenced the gods they were happy, but one day they let slip the secret that they were more in love than Zeus and Hera. This angered Hera who sent Discord to fill them with a spirit of rivalry. As Polytechnos was on the point of completing a chariot seat and Aedon was finishing weaving a web they mutually agreed that whoever finished the work first should receive the present of a slave-girl from the other. When Aedon finished first (for Hera helped her) Polytechnos was angered by her victory and went to Pandareos pretending that he had been sent by Aedon to bring back her sister Chelidon [swallow]. Pandareos suspecting no evil handed her over. But Polytechnos took the girl and raped her in a bush. He

then dressed her in strange clothes, cut her hair off and threatened to kill her if she revealed anything to Aedon. When he reached home he handed her sister over to Aedon to be her slave-girl, in accordance with the terms of the agreement. She plied her with work, until holding a pitcher Chelidon broke down by a well. Aedon heard her laments and after recognizing one another and embracing they plotted Polytechnos' doom. After cutting up the child they put the flesh in a cauldron and boiled it. Aedon arranged for a neighbour to tell Polytechnos to taste the flesh and went off with her sister to tell her father. When Polytechnos realized that he had eaten his child's flesh he pursued the fugitives right to their father's. He was captured by Pandareos' servants and bound with strong bonds, because he had brought dishonour on his household. After smearing his body with honey he was thrown among the sheep. Flies landed on Polytechnos and tortured him, but Aedon pitied him for their former love and kept them off. When her parents and brother saw what she was doing their hatred knew no bounds and they wished to kill her. But Zeus, before a worse tragedy could befall the house of Pandareos, was moved by pity and changed them into birds. Some flew as far as the sea, others into the air. Pandareos became a sea-eagle, Aedon's mother a kingfisher and immediately wished to plunge into the sea, but Zeus prevented her. These birds are good omens to mariners. But Polytechnos was changed into a woodpecker, because Hephaestus (god of craftsmen) had given him an axe when he was a carpenter. And this bird is a good omen for carpenters. Aedon's brother became a hoopoe, which is also a good omen for mariners as well as travellers on land and in particular when it appears in company with the sea-eagle and the kingfisher.

'As for Aedon and Chelidon the former is always lamenting by rivers and brakes for her son Itys, while Chelidon lives in the company of men by the will of Artemis, because it was by violence that she lost her virginity and called most upon Artemis to come to her aid.'

On this version Cook[4] comments 'The recurrence of oak and axe and woodpecker in the Tereus-Polytechnus myth cannot be accidental. I infer that Tereus and Polytechnus were oak-kings, armed with the weapon of and transformed into the birds of an oak-Zeus.' But Antoninus makes no mention of a woodpecker.

One form of the Tereus-Polytechnus myth is at least as old as Homer,[6] but in this version Itylus, not Itys, is said to have been the son of Zethus, not Tereus, and the only transformation mentioned is that of his mother, the daughter of Pandareos, into a nightingale (see chap.

IV). There is again no mention of a woodpecker and Aeschylus, as mentioned in the last chapter, describes the nightingale as being pursued by a hawk.[6] In the usual version Tereus is changed into a hoopoe.

It is true that Apollodorus[7] arms Tereus with an axe, like Polytechnus, which in Cook's[8] view possessed a ritual significance. Also Hyginus[9] tells a story about Dryas (Oak-man) whom Tereus, his brother, slew in the mistaken belief that he was plotting against his son. But once again there is no mention of a woodpecker. Cook's theory is like Hamlet without the Prince of Denmark. None of the actors in the drama conveniently change into woodpeckers, so that it seems difficult, if not impossible, to connect the Tereus-Polytechnus myth with Euelpides' playful objection.

Antoninus Liberalis[10] mentions the green woodpecker (*keleos*) in a very strange story, which like that of Polytechnus derives from Boios.

'It is said that in Crete there exists a sacred cave inhabited by bees, in which, according to myth, Rhea bore Zeus. No-one has the right to enter it whether god or mortal. Annually at an appropriate time a great fire is seen blazing from the cave. This happens, they say, whenever Zeus' afterbirth boils. The cavern is inhabited by sacred bees, Zeus' nurses. Laios, Kelcos, Kerberos and Aigolios dared to enter the cave in the hope of obtaining a vast store of honey. They were entirely protected by bronze and stole the bees' honey. They gazed on Zeus' swaddling-clothes and their bronze armour shattered. Zeus thundered and brandished a bolt, but the Fates and Themis restrained him, for it was unlawful to die in such a holy place. So Zeus transformed them all into birds and it is from them that derive the tribe of ominous birds, rock thrushes, green woodpeckers, kerberoi and aigolioi. They provide more reliable omens than other birds because they have seen the blood of Zeus.'

From Cook's point of view the green woodpecker is the vital feature, though others like the boiling of the after-birth and the shattering of the bronze are arresting. The latter is represented on a vase from Vulci in the British Museum,[11] which dates from the sixth century B C and proves that the myth was old. It seems possible that the description derives from the ritual of the Kuretes, the priests of the Kouros[12] (literally 'Youth'), a Cretan vegetation deity with whom Zeus was identified and who died annually and was reborn. But although his companions are also bird-men, no special emphasis is placed on Keleos in the story to suggest that he was connected with a woodpecker cult.

J. Rendel Harris[13] regarded the woodpecker as a European representative of the 'thunder-bird', which is associated with American Indian beliefs and primitive mythology elsewhere. The 'thunder-bird' lived in the oak, and was associated with Zeus. Important cult centres grew up round certain oaks where the woodpecker was commonly observed and these settlements received names like Keleae (green woodpeckers) and Picenum (Picus being the Latin for woodpecker). In his view the tale of the Thieves was a mythical account of an actual trial of strength between rustics stealing honey and woodpeckers after the bees' larvae. But the analysis omits the interesting features of the boiling blood and the shattered bronze by concentrating on a single and apparently trivial feature.

E. A. Armstrong[14] also supported the view that the woodpecker was a 'thunder-bird' and thought that its habit of drumming was connected with rain-making. He also considered that Zeus changed Keleos into a woodpecker as a 'pretender to his authority' at a time when 'forest-dwelling people moved away from the oak woods and established sacred places in the mountains' with a resultant loss of dignity to the woodpecker, whereas bees 'retained their association with the anthropomorphized god'. He finds a connection with King Keleos of Eleusis, who entertained the goddess Demeter, and whose son Triptolemos invented the plough, because the action of the woodpecker searching for ants with its bill resembled that of the plough-share driving a furrow.[15]

Robert Graves[16] actually supposed that the myth of Zeus and Io was based on a ritual in which men disguised as woodpeckers tapped on oak doors crying 'Io! Io!' in order to invite rain!

The third piece of evidence quoted by Cook[17] in support of his hypothesis that the woodpecker was once a sacral bird was the errant version, preserved in the Suda, of the inscription on the tomb of Zeus said to have been observed by Pythagoras in Crete. The normal version, which is preserved in several late authorities[18] reads:

'Here lies Zan, whom they call Zeus' or words to that effect.

But the version in the *Suda*[19] reads 'Here lies Pekos who was also Zeus'.

Since Picus was the Latin for woodpecker and the bird was associated with an oracle of Mars,[20] while Picus was said to have been changed into a woodpecker by Circe[21] for rejecting her love, Cook supposed that it proved that Zeus had once been associated with woodpeckers. In effect, as Halliday[22] demonstrated, it is only one example of the

methods of Euhemerus (third century BC) who suggested in a novel that the gods were originally men. Zeus was associated with Picus, the Italian king, not with 'picus' the woodpecker.

In his search for bird cults Cook[23] did not confine himself to the woodpecker, but claimed to have found evidence for the former existence of a cuckoo cult in the Argolid connected with the worship of Zeus and Hera.

'A road' says Pausanias,[24] 'leads there [i.e. to Halike] between mounts Pron [Headland] and another mountain known as Thornax in ancient times, though it is said that it altered its name after Zeus was changed into a cuckoo on that mountain. There are still sanctuaries on the summits, one of Zeus on Cuckoo Mountain and one of Hera on Pron.'

Unfortunately we are ignorant of the age of the sanctuaries which Pausanias mentions, but that Hera at least was connected with the cuckoo seems clear from his description of the goddess' statue in the Heraion near Argos,[25] where he also mentions the myth referred to in chap. XVIII.

'The image of Hera is seated on a throne. It is of colossal size, and made of gold and ivory, and is the work of Polyclitus. The goddess is wearing a crown with the Graces and Seasons engraved upon it. In one hand she holds a pomegranate, in the other a sceptre. As for the story about the pomegranate I would rather not mention it as it would be somewhat irreverent to do so. Regarding the cuckoo which perches on the sceptre, they say that Zeus, when he was in love with Hera as a girl, changed himself into this bird, and that she caught it to play with. This story and similar ones about the gods I record though I do not accept them.'

Hera is also shown holding a cuckoo-crowned sceptre on a lekythos in the British Museum[26] dating from the fourth century BC. Cook[27] connected the Cuckoo Mountain with Aristophanes' 'Cloudcuckoo-town' and Jane Harrison[28] was convinced that it was 'no mere fancy of the comedian but on the actual foundation of ancient bird cultus that Cloudcuckootown – Nephelekokkygion is built. Did not Zeus himself woo Hera in the form of a cuckoo? The Sky-father in bird form woos the Earth Maiden.'

But the weakness of this argument, apart from the consideration that Hera was never regarded as an earth goddess,[29] is that there is nothing to show that the myth was not invented to explain the representations of cuckoos at the Argive Heraion whether on the gutters or 'the goddess' sceptre. Hera's association with cuckoos was

probably independent of Zeus, as Peter Levi[30] suggests, but how the association arose remains a mystery.

On the subject of Bird Cults the views of Sir William Halliday,[31] formulated more than sixty years ago, are still valid to-day.

'It is the kind of problem, however, in which the negative aspect of comparative evidence carries more weight than what may prove to be chance coincidences, and the result of a fairly systematic search has increased my doubts as to the existence of bird gods or bird cults in early Greek or pre-Hellenic history.'

CHAPTER XXI

BIRDS IN FOLKLORE AND FABLE

Birds played a major role in Greek folklore. For examples we are largely indebted to Aristophanes and Athenaeus' quotations from authors no longer extant. One of the most striking instances of a custom connected with birds was that of greeting the kite, when it returned from migration in spring.

'Take the kite,' says Peisthetairus in the *Birds*. 'He ruled as king over the Greeks in days of yore.'[1]

BIRD'S CHORUS: 'Over the Greeks?

PEISTHETAIRUS: 'Yes – and when he first ruled he taught men how to bow before kites.

EUELPIDES: 'It's true by Dionysus. I always bowed before a kite when I saw one. And then gaping up supine I swallowed an obol and took an empty shopping basket home.'

Greeks were in the habit of carrying money in their mouths, and Euelpides in his efforts to make lowly obeisance swallowed his cash and went home empty handed. The ancient commentator[2] on the passage says that the poor were so delighted at the return of spring that they grovelled on the ground when the first kite appeared.

The kite, of course, had a bad reputation as a thief[3] and for sacrilegious behaviour[4] and Peisthetairus' claim that it was once a monarch was calculated to raise a laugh simply because it was so disreputable. On the other hand kites are very large and conspicuous birds, as well as being singularly bold, and the sudden arrival of a flock in a city or village was likely to attract more immediate attention than the passing skeins of cranes or even the twitter of an early swallow.

The swallow also attracted attention in spring, as is clear from a vase painting[6] where a boy exclaims 'Look! A swallow!' To which a man replies 'By Heracles – you're right!' while another boy cries 'Spring's come!' It was also customary to sing a Swallow Song in the bird's honour, but for some curious reason only in the autumn in Rhodes. Athenaeus'[0] account derives from an unknown historian called Theognis who wrote a work on Rhodian festivals.

'There is a type of collecting,' he writes, 'which the Rhodians call singing the Swallow Song, which takes place during the month of

Boedromion (September/October). It is called "singing the Swallow Song" from the custom of addressing the swallow in the following words:

' "The swallow has come, has come/, Bringing fair weather/And fair seasons/With white breast and black/Roll out preserved fruit from your rich store/, A cup of wine and a basket of cheese/The Swallow disdains not a wheat-cake and bean bread/. Shall we go away/Or help ourselves/If you give we'll go. If not we won't leave you alone./ We'll make off with your door or the lintel/Or your wife seated within/She's tiny, so we'll easily carry her./ If you give us anything, great will be your reward/Open, open the door to the swallow/We aren't old men but boys."

The custom was instituted by Kleobulos of Lindos, when the necessity to collect money once arose in Lindos.'

Echoes of such songs may be detected in the *Homeric Epigrams*,[7] Sappho[8] and Aristophanes.[9] Similar songs are sung in modern Greece at the Feast of the Cross on 1 March.

'The swallow comes from the white sea. Sit and sing. March, March summons me and February though you snow, though you drown, once more you smell of spring.'[10]

Presumably a swallow was hawked round by children, like the Crow in the Rhodian Crow Song, quoted by Athenaeus[11] from Phoenix of Colophon.

'Kind sirs, give a handful of wheat to the Crow/The child of Apollo, or a platter of wheat/, or a loaf or a penny, or what you will/ Give good sirs whatever each has to hand/To the Crow. She will accept a block of salt/For she loves to dine on this./Whoever gives salt to-day will give a honeycomb to-morrow./ Boy, push open the door. Wealth has heard./ And a maid brings figs for the Crow. Ye gods may the maid be blameless in every respect/And find a rich and famous husband/And may she lay a son in her old father's arms/And a daughter on her mother's knees/. To nurture her own scion as a wife for her kinsmen/For my part where ever my feet take me / I go in turn singing / with the tuneful Muses at the door / Whether a man gives or does not give more than I ask.' And at the end of his verses he adds:

'But good sirs, hand out some of the wealth from your store / Give sir, give lady bride too / When the Crow asks it is customary to give a handful / This is my refrain. Give something and it will suffice.'

Athenaeus adds that the singers of the Crow Song were known as

Coronists. It was sung at weddings, according to Aelian[12] 'as a pledge to those who had come together to beget children', since crows were reputed to be faithful. Both the Swallow and Crow Songs bear more than a passing resemblance to the activities of carol singers in modern days, and their inspiration was presumably just as secular. Cranes engage in dancing during the breeding season in order to attract mates. The Crane Dance traditionally instituted by Theseus is described by Plutarch.[13]

'On his return from Crete Theseus cast anchor at Delos and after sacrificing to the god and dedicating the statue of Aphrodite, which he received from Ariadne, he danced in company with the youths a dance which is still said to be performed by the men of Delos. It imitates the winding passages in the Labyrinth and certain rhythmical convolutions. This type of dance, according to Dicaearchus (fourth century B C) is called the Crane and Theseus danced it round the Horned Altar, which is made entirely from horns taken from the left side of the head.'

Aelian[14] quotes an example of a Wagtail Dance from the *Drummers* of the comic poet Autocrates: 'As dear maiden daughters of Lydia, sport, lightly leaping and clap their hands, in honour of fair Artemis at Ephesus, now bending, now raising their hips, pirouetting like a wagtail.'

The Scops dance, according to Aelian[15] and Athenaeus,[16] imitated the antics of the scops owl, which like the little owl and the long-eared owl, was said to be a capital mimic. The ruses employed by fowlers to fascinate the birds has been described in chap. XI.

Other customs concerned the cock. According to Aelian[17] the only way to persuade a new cock to remain with the hens and not to return to its original master was to carry him three times round the dining-room table.

At Methana in Argolis in order to prevent the Sirocco scorching the vines it was the cruel custom, Pausanias[18] says, for two men to tear a white cock in two and, each carrying his half, to run round the vines in opposite directions and to bury it at the starting point. The cock again was supposed to frighten lions and the Basilisk (a kind of serpent) so that travellers in Libya always took one with them as a protection against such monsters.[19]

'Bird's milk' or 'fowl's milk' was employed like our phrase 'pigeon's milk' for an unobtainable luxury. 'I wouldn't exchange the life of which you threaten to rob me for bird's milk', says Philocleon in the *Wasps*.[20]

Fables about birds are very common in Greek literature and even Aristotle,[21] or rather the author of Book IX of the *History of Animals*, is not above quoting one about the eagle. 'The story goes that the eagle is punished in this fashion [i.e. dying of starvation when its beak grew so crooked that it could not eat] because it was once a man and declined to entertain a guest.'

Two of the best known fables concern cranes. The myth that they waged war on the Pygmies was known to Homer,[22] who likens the clamour of the Trojans to that of cranes 'which flee from the winter and portentous rain, and with clamour they fly towards the streams of ocean, bringing death and doom to the Pygmy folk. And in the early morning, I ween, they offer fell strife.' Aristotle[23] too believed the tale. 'For they [i.e. the cranes] migrate from the steppes of Scythia to the marshes south of Egypt, at the source of the Nile. It is there that they are said to fight with the Pygmies. And this is no idle story, for a race of dwarfs actually exists with dwarf horses in proportion and inhabits subterranean caves.'

According to Antoninus Liberalis[24] there lived among the Pygmies a girl called Oenoe of outstanding beauty, but disagreeable and proud. She paid no attention to Hera and Artemis. After her marriage and the birth of her child Mopsos Hera changed her into a crane. When she flew over the houses to catch a glimpse of her son the Pygmies attacked her and from that time on there has been war between the two! According to Athenaeus[25] the girl was called Gerana (Crane), but both versions derive from Boios. The myth seems to be founded on fact. Herodotus[26] knew of an expedition by the Nasamonians to the Niger, which encountered a race of Pygmies. Whether they hunted cranes or ostriches we are not told, though modern explorers[27] claim that they still hunt the former. Others, like Graves,[28] have interpreted the fable as an allegory of the traditional warfare between the Pygmies and tall, crane-like invaders from Somaliland.

Analagous to the war between the cranes and the Pygmies was the traditional enmity between the owls and the crows. According to Aristotle[29] and Aelian[30] they robbed one another's nests. Hence the proverb 'Owls say one thing, crows another.'[31]

The Cranes of Ibycus[32] is another curious fable. The famous lyric poet was said to have been murdered by robbers in the neighbourhood of the Crane Mountains north of Corinth, and called upon the birds to avenge him. When the murderers reached Corinth one of them seeing a flock of cranes flying overhead remarked to his companion 'Look,

the avengers of Ibycus!' He was overheard and the pair were duly punished. The wisdom of cranes was, of course, proverbial (see chap. XII) and became associated in myth with a poet whose name, according to Hesychius[33] meant a 'kind of bird', or possibly there was confusion with the ibis.

The fable of Apollo and the Raven is at least as old as Hesiod:[34] 'The raven came as a messenger from the holy feast to lovely Pytho and revealed the secret deed to Phoebus whose locks are unshorn.'

The reference, as so often, is cryptic since Greeks naturally assumed that the reader could fill the gaps in the story for himself. According to the most familiar version[35] of the fable Apollo fell in love with Coronis and left the raven to guard her. But Coronis made love with Ischys when she was already with child. The raven duly informed the god who cursed it for failing to interfere with the result that it turned black. Dionysius[36] tells a different tale. When Coronis was bearing Asclepius Apollo sent the raven to fetch water. Instead it dallied mating. So the god turned it black and made its beak swell. Hence ravens alone of birds do not supply their young with water. The fable, like so many, is patently aetiological explaining why the raven is black and has a swollen bill.

Such fables are common from Hesiod onward. Birds, in true Greek fashion, are conceived in human terms and the tales contain a moral. To illustrate the power of the strong over the weak Hesiod[37] tells the fable, in the *Works and Days*, of the hawk and the nightingale. When the nightingale was seized in the hawk's talons and bewailed its fate the hawk replied cynically 'Upon my word, what are you fussing about? You are now in the hands of someone stronger than you are and wherever I take you you needs must go. Your skill as a songster cuts no ice with me. I'll have you for dinner, if I choose, or perhaps let you go. A man is a fool to try conclusions with a stronger, for he's bound to be beaten and suffers pain as well as humiliation.'

Pigeons and doves played a major role in fable. The Bible story that Noah despatched a raven and subsequently a dove to discover whether the Flood was receding reappeared in the myth of Deucalion[38] who sent a dove on a similar mission. Jason[39] also despatched a dove to essay the dangerous passage between the Wandering Rocks, while the Argo dashed between them as they reopened. The bird barely escaped crushing, though according to Homer[40] not even the doves which supplied Zeus with ambrosia were able to get through.

The extraordinary fable about the prudery of the purple gallinule

is mentioned both by Polemon[41] and Aelian.[42] Aelian's account has already been quoted (see chap. 1) Polemon's is much the same: 'When it is tamed it keeps a watchful eye on married women and is so upset if a woman proves unfaithful that when it suspects adultery it advises its master by hanging itself.'

Aelian gives parallel examples of a dog,[43] a stork[44] (which stabbed an erring woman with its bill) and an elephant,[45] as well as of a bird which pined and died when its friend a cock was sacrificed.[46] Dionysius[47] goes even further. The gallinule, he says, is so chaste that it refuses to mate in public and cannot even tolerate the sight of a bridegroom.

Best known of all are *Aesop's Fables*, of varying date and origin, in which the characters are, for the most part, familiar birds like larks, eagles, ravens, daws, cocks, geese or swans. Two are mentioned by Aristophanes in the *Birds*, concerning the lark[48] and the eagle.[49]

The lark was born before the earth, so when her father died there was nowhere to bury him except in her head. That is why she has a crest. Again it did not pay the fox to consort with the eagle, for when the eagle nested at the top of a tree and the fox had her earth at its foot, the eagle ate the cubs. But the eagle paid for her treachery when her nest caught fire from a burning piece of offal, which the bird had stolen from the sacrifice, and the eaglets fell down and were eaten by the vixen. The moral was that heaven will pay you out if you break a friendly compact. The fable is simple and childish (like the parables in the Bible) but the moral runs deep.[50]

Many deal with the folly of pride, like that of the cock[51] which after vanquishing its rival climbed a high wall and crowed in triumph, only to be seen and snatched by an eagle. Or the jackdaw[52] which sought to emulate the eagle by pouncing on to the back of a sheep. But its claws became embedded in the wool and it was caught by the shepherd, who kept it to be his children's pet. So the raven[53] which envied the swan's white plumage took to living by rivers and lakes only to die of hunger.

Warnings against flattery are common. When the fox told the raven[54] that it would be king of birds if it only had a voice, it foolishly opened its beak to croak and dropped the meat it was carrying.

Some fables are more subtle, like the eagle[55] which suffered a double grief when shot by an arrow winged with its own feathers, or that of the over-zealous halcyon.[56] 'The halcyon is a bird which prefers solitude and spends all its life at sea. They say that as a precaution against men's machinations it was accustomed to make its nest on a rock by the

sea. Well one day when it felt the urge to lay, it came across a headland and spying a rock actually surrounded by the sea it nested there. While it was away getting food the sea, driven by a gale, rose to the level of the nest, engulfed it and drowned its offspring. When the halcyon returned and saw what had happened it exclaimed "What a fool I am! I avoided the dry land as treacherous and took refuge in the sea, which has now proved more treacherous still." ' The statement that the halcyon spends its life at sea and that its nest is swamped by the tide suggests confusion with the tern.

More complex is the fable about the eagle[57] which was caught by a man who deprived it of its feathers. It was then caught by another who restored them. In gratitude it repaid him with a hare. But a fox reminded it that it should have repaid the first man in case he caught it again.

It is a matter of experience that birds soon grow wise about scarecrows and come to ignore them. So, for a time, when a farmer waved an empty sling to frighten the cranes from his crops the birds flew away in alarm. Later they ignored his efforts, so the farmer employed the weapon in earnest and the cranes learned a grim lesson. 'Let's away to the land of the Pygmies,' the survivors counselled 'for this fellow is beginning to take action.'[58]

A rather more ingenious stratagem was employed by a farmer against daws and starlings. When his slave passed him his sling the birds flew away. So he arranged with the slave only to pass him the sling when he asked for bread. In this way the starlings were deceived and paid with their lives. Later they warned the cranes to 'avoid the base race of men who say one thing and do another!'[59]

It is no good pleading innocence as the stork[60] found when it was caught in the crane trap, or to forswear oneself like the raven[61] which was released from a trap by Apollo after promising to sacrifice frankincense. It forgot its vow and when it was caught a second time and prayed to Hermes the god refused to save it. So when the raven,[62] a notorious robber of the gods' altars, fell ill and requested its dam to pray to the gods on its behalf the latter rejoined, 'What god will pity you? From which have you not stolen the flesh?'

Some fables are frankly amusing, with no cautionary overtones. When a farmer released a tame eagle[63] it showed its gratitude by snatching his head-band while he was sleeping beside a ruined wall. The action awakened him and he leaped to his feet in pursuit of the eagle just as the wall collapsed.

So when the swallow[64] boasted of its place in myth and that Tereus

had cut out its tongue, the crow observed drily 'What a chatterbox you'd be, if you still had your tongue!' Again when the swallows[65] mocked the swans for avoiding men the latter replied that they were not mere gossips who mingled music with noise. Once upon a time the kite[66] sang like the swan, but when it attempted to imitate horses neighing it not only failed in its aim, but forgot how to sing.

Some fables are of a philosophical turn. When a fox[67] saw a jackdaw waiting day after day for some figs to ripen it warned it that hope is delusive and will never fill your belly. So the jackdaw[68] which escaped from captivity, only to be caught in the branches of a tree by the string attached to its leg, lamented 'By failing to endure slavery I have robbed myself of life.'

Greed could prove one's undoing as the raven[69] discovered which pounced on the snake. On the other hand the lark[70] lamented that though its desires were exceedingly modest and it never longed for gold, yet it had been trapped by a tiny grain of corn. When a goose[71] laid golden eggs its owner killed it, imagining that it was stuffed with the precious metal. But he found to his disappointment that its inside was the same as that of other geese, so his greed caused him to lose the little he had. It is folly to rely on friends as the lark[72] informed its offspring when a peasant ignored promises to help with the harvest and preferred to engage hired help.

The crow's[73] inferiority to the raven as a bird of omen is illustrated by a fable about some travellers. When a crow sat on a tree and cawed they were perplexed at first until they realized that it was a crow. 'Let's go on, friends,' one of the party advised. 'It's only a crow and its caw's inauspicious.'

A raven[74] blind in one eye, on the other hand, was a poor omen. When some travellers encountered such a bird and one of them suggested that they turned back his companion objected. 'How can this bird tell us the future, when it did not even forsee its own blindness and take steps to avoid it?'

It is unwise to perform services for dangerous acquaintances. So when the heron[75] removed a bone from the wolf's throat and claimed the reward which the beast had promised it, the wolf replied wryly that its life was sufficient reward.

A man caught a partridge[76] and was going to kill it. 'Let me live', the bird pleaded, 'and I will act as a decoy and lead you to other partridges.' But the man replied, 'Why should I show you mercy when you are anxious to deceive your friends?'

When the birds were deciding who to elect as king the peacock[77] claimed the position on the grounds of its beauty. When the other birds agreed the daw raised an objection. 'If you become king and the eagle pursues you how will you be able to help the rest of us?'

Of more sophisticated examples the following are typical. A lark[78] saw a fowler setting traps and inquired what he was up to. The fowler replied that he was building a city. 'If you build cities like that,' the lark rejoined, 'you won't have many citizens!'

An old soldier[79] went to war. Hearing some ravens croaking he laid down his arms. Then picking them up again he proceeded on his way. When the ravens croaked again he stopped and blurted: 'Croak as loud as you like. You shan't have me for dinner!'

The attraction of Aesop's fables is their peasant's common-sense, based on hard experience and a close knowledge of the habits of the animal actors in the drama.

A strange fable about the pelican[80] appealed to the Fathers as an emblem of the Redeemer: 'The pelican is more deeply attached to its offspring than any other bird. The female sits on the nest protecting and cherishing them, but her kisses pierce their sides and they die. After a lapse of three days the male pelican arrives and finding them dead bewails his loss. In a transport of grief he pierces his own side. The stream of blood drips on the wounds of the dead nestlings and brings them to life again.' The alternative version that the pelican fed its offspring on its own life's blood is familiar from modern literature.[81]

Aelian[82] illustrates the stork's proverbial affection for its offspring by describing how it disgorged yesterday's food if it had nothing else to offer, adding that the heron and the pelican were reputed to do the same. In fact young pelicans obtain sustenance by plunging their beaks down their parents' throats, as graphically described by an eye-witness,[83] 'when being fed they reach so far down the parent's gullet that little remains visible outside the parent's bill beyond their legs kicking.' Doubtless the harrowing Christian fable had its origin in this.

According to Aristophanes[84] young storks repaid their parents by feeding them in turn. But even greater rewards awaited them in the hereafter, for they passed to the isles of Ocean and changed into men, or so Alexander of Myndos[85] informs us. The Egyptian goose[86] was also said to decoy people, like the partridge, away from its nest and was honoured by the Egyptians, along with the stork and hoopoe for its filial piety. Other birds beside the pelican, stork and hoopoe were credited with filial piety, like the lammergeyer. The *locus classicus* for

the lammergeyer is found in the *Odyssey*.[87] 'They [i.e. Telemachus and Odysseus] wept aloud, more ceaselessly than birds of omen, crook-taloned lammergeyers and such, whose nestlings the locals have taken away before they were fledged.' It is repeated by Aeschylus[88] in the *Agamemnon* where the war cry of the Greek host was: 'Like lammergeyers wheeling with beating wings, high above their eyrie, in grief for their missing offspring.'

Lammergeyers' eyries are virtually inaccessible and unlikely to be robbed. Also they rarely contain more than a single chick. D'Arcy Thompson[89] suspected that the myth had its origin in the resemblance between the Hebrew for 'compassion' and 'vulture'. Certainly later authorities, like Horapollo,[90] believed that the vulture fed its young on its own flesh, like the Pelican, which may also help to explain the latter fable.

The sixth labour of Heracles[91] was one of the oddest in the cycle. A flock of man-killing birds were said to have invaded the woods surrounding the marshy Stymphalian Lake and after being driven out by wolves to have bred and attacked the inhabitants. The hero was sent to deal with them but found his arrows ineffectual against such vast numbers. So Athena gave him a pair of bronze clappers which so frightened the birds that they left for the island of Ares on the Black Sea where later they did battle with the Argonauts,[92] discharging volleys of brazen feathers.

If real birds were not involved (see chap. x) then the clappers suggest magic or ritual. The Stymphaleia was unhealthy and the birds could have been a mythical way of expressing the presence of fever (malaria?) or other noxious exhalation, which was removed, or frightened away, by the clashing of brazen clappers.[93] Possibly the ritual was connected with the worship of Artemis whose temple Pausanias[49] visited.

'In Stymphalus there is also an ancient fane of Stymphalian Artemis. The image is of wood and is mostly gilded. On the temple roof have been carved too the Stymphalian Birds.' More intriguing still, behind the temple were statues of bird-footed women whose significance will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER XXII

SOUL BIRDS

One of the most intriguing phenomena in Greek art are the human-headed birds, known as 'Sirens', which became popular during the orientalizing period of the seventh and sixth centuries BC. Though generally represented with women's heads and faces, some of the earlier examples are bearded and so presumably male.[1] This curious *Mischwesen* was adopted by the Greeks from their eastern neighbours and came to be utilized in widely differing contexts to represent omens, daemonic powers, the emissaries of deities, or even such abstract notions as music or otherworldly bliss.[2]

So when a hero sets out in his chariot, in a vase scene painted by Exekias,[3] a Siren appears before him as if to warn him of impending doom. On the other hand the Siren which gazes at Aegeus, in a painting of Theseus slaying the Marathonian bull,[4] seems to be intended to re-assure the father that all will be well.

Athena Aithyia[5] was represented as a woman-headed bird, as if to suggest that the bird – diver or shearwater – was more than it seemed and in fact her familiar. So the Siren[6] which accompanies the goddess and her owl when setting forth in her chariot accompanied by Heracles was regarded by A. B. Cook[7] as representing a half-way stage in her development between owl and fully humanized deity. There is no proof that Athena was ever worshipped in owl form (see chap. XVI), but the owl was her familiar, at least in Attica, and the Siren may be only a method of suggesting that she operated through owls. At the same time it is curious that Sirens should appear so frequently in chariot scenes, and not always in a martial context, for on a vase from Olympia[8] a Siren is shown gazing earnestly at Apollo who is holding his lyre, presumably to personify music.

The original Homeric Sirens[9] charmed men with their voices. How the poet visualized them we do not know, because he does not describe them, but it became conventional to represent them as woman-headed birds. The earliest representation of the Homeric Sirens appears on a Corinthian aryballos of the sixth century BC.[10] Two woman-headed birds stand on a rock singing to Odysseus, bound to the mast, while a bird hovers above the deck. The motif recurs on a red-figured

stamnos[11] in the British Museum, except that the Sirens sing from rocky bluffs on either side of the bound hero. A third Siren plunges to her doom, in accordance with the myth that the monster's power was broken once it was successfully resisted.

But musical Sirens antedate the Homeric monsters. Two Siren harpists from Delos date from the end of the Geometric era,[12] while others appear in scenes of feasting, where they seem to personify the spirit of revelry.[13] Later they graced tombs,[14] where they presumably represented the bliss awaiting the pious in the afterworld, though some have supposed that they were intended to personify the souls of the dead. The Sirens, of course, had a sinister side in Homer, while in art they sometimes appear hostile. Those carved on the so-called 'Harpy Tomb'[15] from Xanthos in Anatolia are actually depicted bearing the dead in their arms. Another Siren faces a figure reclining at a feast on a Laconian cup in the Louvre.[16] The feast is presumably a funeral feast, as the presence of the monster reveals. Similar in conception, though even more enigmatic is the helmeted Siren[17] on a Corinthian pinax which stands over a prostrate figure. Oddest of all on a fifth-century vase a Siren flits above the head of the dying Procris,[18] who had been slain like Polonius when spying on her husband, whom she wrongly suspected of infidelity. In all these examples there seems little doubt that the Siren signifies doom, and not, as was argued by Georg Weicker,[19] the souls of the dead.

Weicker pointed out that the Egyptians were in the habit of representing the ghosts of the dead as human-headed birds and believed that the Greeks did the same. Many Sirens were modelled on raptorial birds which indicated, he believed, that, like the vampires of eastern European folklore, they preyed upon the dead. Certainly Homer described the Sirens' song as fatal to all that heard it, but never suggested that the Sirens themselves were malevolent or hostile. Dionysius[20] again accounted for the friendliness of gulls on the grounds that they had once been human, while Devon fishermen confidently expect to be reincarnated as sea-birds. Also the eagle[21] on Plato's tomb described itself as an image of the philosopher's soul. But this is a far cry from a belief that all souls assumed bird form.

Attempts to generalize about the significance of Sirens have failed. For the Greeks the art-form, half human, half bird, provided a useful means of expressing powers and epiphanies of various kinds, as Kunze[22] demonstrated, or the ambiguity of a being whose true habitat was the limbo between this world and the next, as Buschor[23] suggested.

They were in effect the underworld counterparts of the heavenly Muses, whose function was to bring solace to the dead and not to menace them. It was perhaps inevitable that such beings should be conceived as possessing bird form since birds alone fly and sing.

Apart from Homer there are only casual references to the Sirens in literature and they are mainly descriptive and drawn from art. Euripides[24] is the first poet actually to describe them as 'Winged damsels, maiden daughters of Earth'. Elsewhere he describes them as 'wing-footed',[25] while the poetess Erinna[26] refers to the custom of setting Sirens on tombs! 'Grave pillars, Sirens mine and sorrowful urn.'

Plato[27] set the Sirens on the nine whorls of Necessity at the end of the *Republic*, and not, as might have been expected, the Muses. Plutarch[28] explains the philosopher's choice in a passage which perhaps expresses most nearly the Greek conception.

'Now Homer's Sirens, it is true, alarm us, inconsistently with the Platonic myth, but the poet also conveyed a truth symbolically, namely that the power of their music is not inhuman or destructive. As souls depart from this world to the next, and drift, so it seems, uncertainly after death, it creates in them a passionate desire for things heavenly and divine and forgetfulness of mortality. It possesses them and enchants them with its spell, so that in joy they follow the Sirens and join them in their circuits. Here on earth a faint echo of that music reaches us and, appealing to our souls through the medium of words, reminds them of what they experienced in an earlier existence.'

But Sirens were not the only bird monsters. According to myth[29] a race of monstrous birds, belonging to the female sex, inhabited a group of islands, known as the Strophades, which lie off the coast of Messenia, and snatched food from anyone landing there. Their most famous victim was Phineus, a Thracian king, who suffered the torments of starvation because the moment he prepared a meal the Harpies descended and devoured it.

Harpy means 'snatcher' and in Homer the word is loosely applied to a raptorial bird and possibly the kite. Kites would certainly suit the legend since the bird's bold habits as a robber were and are notorious. But kites do not inhabit the Strophades, whereas gulls and shearwaters do and gulls are also bold and greedy. Dionysius[30] identified the 'Harpy' with the lammergeyer, which, however, for all its size is cowardly and shy. Probably the myth started with sailors' exaggerated accounts of the kites' thieving habits in Egypt and elsewhere, coupled with the foul habits of vultures, which were then anthro-

pomorphized in typical Greek fashion and associated with Phineus and the Strophades.

In art the Harpies were represented not as woman-headed birds, but as actual women with wings. On a dish from Aegina[31] dating from the seventh century BC they appear as two women in flight. Like some of the Sirens their identity is revealed in an inscription. The Phineus myth is represented on a black figured cup in Würzburg[32] showing the Harpies being pursued by the two sons of Boreas, the North Wind. Both the latter and the Harpies are furnished in oriental fashion with double wings.

A unique type of Siren was observed by Pausanias[33] at Stymphalus. After examining the birds carved on the temple roof he noted: 'Here also are maidens made of white marble. They have birds' legs and stand behind the temple.' Since the temple was dedicated to Artemis the Sirens were presumably her emissaries, indicating in the context that the man-slaying birds were controlled by the Mistress of the Beasts. Possibly the myth about Heracles had its origin in some ritual connected with the temple, or the ritual grew out of the myth.

Weicker wished to class the Sirens, Harpies and other winged monsters together as soul birds. But the Harpies are clearly distinct from the Sirens and perhaps originally personified whirl-winds. Nevertheless Lycophron[34] described the Sirens as 'Harpy-limbed nightingales'.

'The soul fled from his limbs and went to the House of Hades protesting at the fate which had robbed it of manhood and youth together.'[35]

No bird is admittedly mentioned in Homer's description, but there is no denying that the motion is bird-like or that the souls of slain heroes were imagined as quitting the body like birds flushed from cover. But there is no suggestion that Homer visualized souls as birds.

ABBREVIATIONS

Ael.	Aelian, *De Natura Animalium* (On the characteristics of animals)
VH	*Varia Historia*
Aesch.	Aeschylus
Ag.	Agamemnon
Eum.	*Eumenides*
PV	*Prometheus Vinctus* (Prometheus Bound)
Supp.	*Supplices* (Suppliant Maidens)
Aeschin.	Aeschines
AGL	K. Marót, *Die Anfänge der griechischen Literatur*
Ann.	Tacitus, *Annals*
Ant. Lib.	Antoninus Liberalis
Apollod.	Apollodorus, Bibliotheca (Library)
Ap. Rhod.	Apollonius Rhodius
Argon.	Argonautica
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AJPhil	*American Journal of Philology*
Alex. Trall.	Alexander of Tralles
Arch. Eph.	Archaiologike Ephemeris
AfRw	Archiv für Religionswissenschaft
A.P.	*Anthologia Palatina* (*Greek Anthology*)
Ar.	Aristophanes
Ach.	*Acharnians*
Av.	*Aves* (*Birds*)
Eq.	*Equites* (*Knights*)
Lys.	*Lysistrata*
Pax	*Peace*
Plut.	*Plutus*
Ran.	*Ranae* (*Frogs*)
Thesm.	*Thesmophoriazusae*
Vesp.	*Vespae* (*Wasps*)
Arist.	Aristotle
Col.	*De Coloribus* (*On Colours*)
Eth. Nic.	*Ethica Nicomachea* (*Nicomachaean Ethics*)
Gen. An.	*De Generatione Animalium* (*On the Generation of Animals*)
HA	*Historia Animalium* (*History of Animals*)
Mir. Ausc.	*De Mirabilibus Auscultationibus* (*On Wonderful things heard*)
Part. An.	*De Partibus Animalium* (*On the parts of animals*)
Phgn.	*Physiognomonica* (*Physiognomy*)
Poet.	*Poetica* (*Poetics*)
Artem.	Artemidorus
Oneir.	*Oneirocritica* (*On Dreams*)
ARL	J. Toynbee, *Animals in Roman Life & Art*
Ath.	Athenaeus
ATS	C. R. Long, *The Ayia Triadha Sarcophagus*
BA	R. Meinertzhagen, *Birds of Arabia*
BB	*British Birds*
BBI	T. A. Coward, *The Birds of the British Isles & their Eggs*
BC	Bannerman, D. A. & W. M., *Birds of Cyprus*
BCH	*Bulletin de Correspondance of Hellénique*
BCV	*Berlin Catalogue of Vases*
Birds	B. B. Rogers, *The Birds of Aristophanes*
BK	F. Jackson, *The Birds of Kenya Colony & the Uganda Protectorate*
BM	British Museum
BZB	*Bonner Zoologische Beiträge*
Callim.	Callimachus
CFG	A. Kannellis, *Catalogus Faunae Graeciae, Pars II, Aves*
CJ	*Classical Journal*
Clem Al.	Clement of Alexandria
Paed.	*Paedagogus*

Protr.	*Protrepticus*
CMR	S. Reinach, *Cultes, Mythes et Religions*
CQ	*Classical Quarterly*
CR	*Classical Review*
Cults	L. R. Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*
CVA	*Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*
Cyranid.	*Cyranides*
De alim.	Galen, *De alimentorum facultatibus*
Delt. Arch.	Deltion Archaiologikon
Dial. D.	Lucian, *Dialogi Deorum* (*Dialogues of the Gods*)
Diod.	Diodorus Siculus
Dion.	Dionysius, *De Avibus* (*On Birds*)
Dion. Hal.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus
Ant. Rom.	*Antiquitates Romanae*
Dsc	Dioscorides
Dosith.	Dositheus
Epigr.	*Epigrammata* (*Epigrams*)
Eur.	Euripides
Hel.	*Helena*
IT	*Iphigeneia Taurica* (Iphigenia among the Tauri)
Phoen.	*Phoenissae* (*Phoenician Maidens*)
Rhes.	*Rhesus*
Supp.	*Supplices* (*Suppliant Maidens*)
Eust.	Eustathius
FAC	J. Edmonds, *Fragments of Attic Comedy*
FB	E. A. Armstrong, *The Folklore of Birds*
FD	Fouilles de Delphes
FG	R. T. Peterson, G. R. Mountfort & P. A. D. Hollom, *A Field Guide to the Birds of Britain & Europe*
Fl.	Cicero, *Pro Flacco*
Fr.	*Fragment*
Frazer	Frazer, J. G., *Pausanias's Description of Greece*
GD	W. R. Halliday, *Greek Divination*
GGB	D'Arcy W. Thompson, *A Glossary of Greek Birds*
GGR	M. P. Nilsson, *Geschichte der Griechischen Religion*
GH	U. von Wilamowitz-Moellendorf, *Der Glaube der Hellenen*
GM	R. Graves, *The Greek Myths*
Gp	*Geoponica*
G & R	*Greece & Rome*
GVW	E. Langlotz, *Griechische Vasen in Würzburg*
HD	A. Bouché-Leclercq, *Histoire de la Divination*
Hdt	Herodotus
Herod.	Herodas
Hes.	Hesiod
Cat.	*Catalogue of Women & Eoiae*
Op.	*Opera et Dies* (*Works & Days*)
Sc.	*Shield of Heracles*
HGR	Quillet, *Histoire Générale des Religions*
HH	*Homeric Hymn*
Horap.	*Horapollo*
Iambl.	Iamblichus
Protr.	*Protrepticus*
Il.	Homer, *Iliad*
IO	J. Gwyn Griffiths, *Plutarch's de Iside et Osiride*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
J. Orn.	*Journal für Ornithologie*
JS	J. Pollard, *Journey to the Styx*
Lucret.	*Lucretius*
Lycoph.	*Lycophron*
MDAI (A)	*Mitteilungen des deutschen archäologische Instituts:* Athenische Abteilung
MJ	E. Buschor, *Die Musen des Jenseits*
MMR	M. P. Nilsson, *The Minoan Mycenaean Religion*
OCD	*Oxford Classical Dictionary*
Od.	Homer, *Odyssey*
Orpheus	W. K. C. Guthrie, *Orpheus and Greek Religion*

Ov.	Ovid
Met.	*Metamorphosis*
Parat. facil.	Galen, *De remediis facile parabilibus*
Par. Gr.	*Paroemiographi Graeci*
Paus.	Pausanias
Philol.	*Philologus*
Philol. Suppl.	*Supplement to Philologus*
Pind.	Pindar
Isth.	*Isthmian Odes*
Nem	*Nemean Odes*
Ol.	*Olympian Odes*
Pyth.	*Pythian Odes*
Pl.	Plato
Grg.	*Gorgias*
Phd.	*Phaedo*
Phdr.	*Phaedrus*
Plt.	*Politicus*
Resp.	*Respublica* (*Republic*)
Tht.	*Theaetetus*
Plin.	Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia* (*Natural History*)
Plut.	Plutarch
Alc.	*Alcibiades*
Alex.	*Alexander*
Ant.	*Antonius*
De am. pr.	*De amore prolis* (*On the love of offspring*)
De def. or.	*De defectu oraculorum* (*On the obsolescence of oracles*)
De esu carn.	*De esu carnium* (*On the eating of flesh*)
De garr.	*De garrulitate* (*On talkativeness*)
Demetr.	*Demetrius*
De Soll.	*De sollertia animalium* (*On the cleverness of animals*)
An.	
Luc.	*Lucullus*
Par.	*Parallela Graeca et Romana* (*Parallel Greek & Roman Stories*)
Per.	*Pericles*
Praec.	*Precepts of Statesmanship*
Sol.	*Solon*
Sympos.	*Symposiaca* (*Table-Talk*)
Them.	*Themistocles*
Thes.	*Theseus*
P. Oxy	*Oxyrhynchus Papyri*
Proc. Brit. Acad.	*Proceedings of the British Academy*
RE	Pauly-Wissowa, *Real-Encyclopädie des klassische Altertumswissenschaft*
SE	*Studi Etruschi*
Simp. Med.	Galen, *De simplicium medicamentorum temperamentis facultatibus*
SIG	*Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*
Soph.	Sophocles
El.	*Electra*
OC	*Oedipus Coloneus*
SSS	J. Pollard, *Seers, Shrines & Sirens*
Syr. D.	Lucian, *De Syria Dea* (*On the Syrian goddess*)
TBSA	A. Roberts, *The Birds of South Africa*
TCHR	*Transactions of the Third International Congress for the History of Religions*
Theoc.	Theocritus
Theol. Graec.	Cornutus, *Summary of the Traditions concerning Greek Mythology*
Thphr.	Theophrastus
Caus. Pl.	*De Causis Plantarum* (*On the causes of plants*)
Char.	*Characters*
HP	*Historia Plantarum* (*History of Plants*)
Od.	*De Odoribus* (*On Odours*)
Sign.	*De Signis Tempestatum* (*On Weather Signs*)
Thuc.	Thucydides
UBHJ	*University of Birmingham Historical Journal*
Verg.	Vergil
Aen.	*Aeneid*
App. Verg.	*Appendix Vergiliana*
Ecl.	*Eclogues*
G	*Georgics*
Xen.	Xenophon
Anab.	*Anabasis*
Cyn.	*Cynegeticus*
Cyr.	*Cyropaedia*
Mem.	*Memorabilia*
YB	W. Warde Fowler, *A Year with the Birds*

NOTES

CHAPTER I

1 *Poet*, 1451 B 3.
2 III, 42.
3 Arist. *HA* IX, 609 B 25.
4 ibid. *HA* VI, 563 A 15; Ael. II, 3, XVII, 20.
5 ibid. *HA* IX, 609 B 5.
6 ibid. *Mir Ausc.*, 831 B 14.
7 Ael. III, 13.
8 Arist. *HA* IX, 619 A 16.
9 Ael. III, 23, quoting Alexander of Myndos.
10 Arist. *HA* IX, 615 B 23.
11 Horap. I, 54.
12 e.g. Epiphanius (6th c. AD), quoted in Ch. XXI
13 Arist. *HA*, 616 A 19.
14 760.
15 1292
16 Ar. *Av.*, 874, Ach., 1105.
17 ibid. *Av.*, 273.
18 Aesch. *Eum.*, 866; Ar. *Av.*, 483; Herod. VI, 101. 'Shut the door there girl, count the hens and see whether they're safe.'
19 Soph. *fr.*, 866 (Pearson); Ar. *Av.*, 1082.
20 Ar. *Ach.*, 878, *Peace*, 1004.
21 ibid. *Av.*, 768; Xen. *Mem.* II, I 4.
22 ibid. *Pax.*, 789
23 Antiphon quoted by Athenaeus 397 C.
24 Ar. *Av.*, 865, 891 f.
25 Aesch. *Supp.*, 751; *A.P.* XI, 323, 'Only the letters R and L differentiate ravens (*korakes*) from flatterers (*kolakes*). A raven and a lick-spittle (literally 'altar robbing') flatterer are one and the same.'
26 Soph. *OC*, 671 f.
27 I saw it by the Alpheios at Olympia in 1949 and doubtless it was once common in all suitable localities as D'Arcy Thompson says (*GGB*, 202). The Cephisus has long been canalized.
28 The hoopoe plays a major role in Aristophanes' *Birds*. It frequents gardens on the rare occasions when it visits Britain and is still fairly common in Greece. I saw a party on the Acrocorinthus in 1949 (see *JS*, 125) and another near Megalopolis in the spring of 1965.
29 Ar. *Av.*, 567, 881 f.; Dion. II, 4.
30 Arist. *HA* IX, 542 B 25.
31 Ar. *Av.*, 502, 713.
32 Hes. *Op.*, 568; Ar. *Av.*, 714.
33 Hes. *Op.*, 484; Ar. *Av.*, 507. Heard near Dafni on April 21.
34 Hes. *Op.*, 448; Ar. *Av.*, 710.
35 Ael. III, 23
36 See Halliday, *GD*, 258 f.
37 *Il.* II, 858, XIII, 70, XVII, 218.
38 *Il.* I, 69, VI, 76.
39 Eur. *Phoen.*, 767.
40 *Av.*, 529 f.
41 *Av.*, 1077.
42 *Av.*, 525 f.
43 Xen. *Anab.* I, 5, 3.
44 Ael. I, 45, III, 26.
45 Ael. I, 35.
46 Ael. I, 42.
47 Plut. *Alc.*, 10.
48 *A.P.* VII, 204, 205 and 206.
49 Theoc. V, 96, 133.
50 Arist. *HA* IX, 612 B 32; Ael. III, 5, 44, X, 33 *VH* I, 15; Athen., 394; Dion. I, 25.
51 *Av.*, 471 f.
52 op. cit., 651 f.
53 Hes. *Cat.*, 89; Dion., 1, 9. For the fable of white ravens see Armstrong, *FB*, 84.
54 Homer, *Od.* XIX, 518; Soph. *El.*, 107; Eur. *Rhes.*, 546; Thuc. II, 29; Ar. *Av.*, 665.
55 See n. 32.
56 See n. 31.
57 e.g. *Il.* XXIV, 310 where Priam prays to Zeus to send an eagle as a sign that his visit to Achilles to retrieve Hector's body may prove successful.
58 Ar. *Av.*, 516.
59 *hH.*, XXI; Ar. *Av.*, 772, 869; Ael. XI, 1.
60 *Od.* XV, 525 f.; Ar. *Av.*, 516.
61 Clytus Miles in Ath. 655C-F; Ael. V, 27.
62 Menodotus in Ath. 655A. Menodotus wrote a work *On Objects at the temple of the Samian Hera* (3rd c. BC?)
63 Xen. *Cyr.*, 1, 4, 9; Diod. II, 4; Lucian, *Syr. D.* c. 14; Karageorghis, *Kition.*
64 First in Eur. *IT.*, 1104, *Hel.*, 19, etc., *Or.*, 1388.
65 Schol. Theoc. XV, 64;

Paus. II, 17, 4.
66 *Il.* XIII, 62 f.
67 *Od.* III, 371 f., XXII, 239 f., I, 319 f.
68 *Il.* VII, 58 f.
69 *Od.* V, 337 f.
70 Aesch. *Supp.*, 60, Soph. quoted by Arist. *HA* IX, 633 A 19; Schol. Ar. *Av.*, 212; Apollod. III, 14, 8; Paus. I, 41, 9.
71 App. Verg. *Ciris*; Dion. II, 14.
72 Ael. IV, 42.
73 *Av.*, 166 f.

CHAPTER II

1 VIII, 44.
2 Aristotle moved to Mytilene in Lesbos after leaving Assos in Mysia on the death of the ruler Hermias, a fellow student, in 345 B.C. See Lee, *CQ*, 42 (1948), 61 ff. Löhrl found Aristotle's station in Lemnos the best for studying birds. See *Vogelwelt*, 86 (1965), 105 f.
3 For the value of the ninth book of *HA* see *GGB*, 197. For Pliny as an independent authority see Arnott, *CQ* LVIII (1964), 250
4 *HA* IX, 616 A 6.
5 *HA* IX, 618 B 2.
6 *HA* IX, 619 B 13.
7 *HA* IX, 614 B 14.
8 *HA* IX, 615 A 28.
9 *HA* IX, 609 A 13.
10 *HA* IX, 610 A 4.
11 *HA* IX, 610 A 8.
12 *HA* IX, ibid.
13 *Il.* XIV, 290.
14 *HA* IX, 617 B 6.
15 *HA* IX, 620 A 13. 'So called by fishermen from its lightness (*kouphotes*) for it runs on the surface of the water.' Dion. II, 10 which suggests the storm petrel (*hydrobates pelagicus*).
16 *HA* IX, 617 A 8.
17 *HA* IX, 615 B 10.
18 *HA* IX, 618 B 18. 'Investigation has revealed that his reliability, quickly increases when the creatures that he is discussing are not native to the Aegean basin, particularly its north & eastern shores', Arnott, *CQ* LVIII, (1964), 249.
19 *HA* IX, 614 A 1.
20 *HA* IX, 615 A 24.
21 *HA* IX, 612 B 18.
22 *HA* IX, 612 B 32.
23 *HA* I, 487 B 18.
24 *HA* I, 487 B 25.
25 *HA* I, 488 A 4.
26 *HA* I, 488 A 15.
27 *HA* I, 488 A 33.
28 *HA* I, 488 B 2.
29 *HA* I, 488 B 4.
30 *HA* II, 503 B 29.
31 *HA* II, 503 B 30.
32 *HA* II, 504 B 6.
33 *HA* VI, 558 B 11–28.
34 *HA* VI, 562 B 3.
35 *HA* VI, 559 A 1.
36 *HA* VI, 559 A 22.
37 *HA* VI, 560 B 18.
38 *HA* IV, 536 A 30.
39 *HA* III, 519 A 1. Aristotle excepts the crane, whose wings, he says, grow black with age.
40 *HA* VI, 559 A 28.
41 *HA* VI, 560 A 3.
42 *HA* VI, 563 B 14.
43 *HA* VIII, 597 B 1.
44 *Mir. Ausc.*, 831 B 14.
45 *Mir. Ausc.*, 832 A 15.
46 *Mir. Ausc.*, 834 B 35.
47 *Mir. Ausc.*, 839 A 24.
48 812 B 13.
49 813 A 20.
50 Ath., 387 B.
51 Ath., 390 A; 202n. 17b.
52 *Caus. Pl.* II, 1, 7.
53 Ath. 390 C.
54 Ael. III, 38.
55 *Caus. Pl.* VI, 5. However, he qualifies the statement in *On Odours*, II, with 'if it be true'.
56 *Hist. Pl.* II, 4, 4.
57 Ath., 391 B. For Alexander of Myndos as a primary source of Aelian and the debt of both Alexander and Dionysius to Boios see Wellmann, *Hermes* XXVI (1891), 481 f. For Boios see Ch. XIX.
58 Ath., 388 A.
59 Ath., 398 C.
60 Ath., 391 F.
61 Ath., 392 C.
62 Ath., 393 D.
63 Ath., 394 E.
64 *HA* IX, 613 A 12.
65 I, 44.
66 I, 48.
67 II, 47.
68 II, 46.
69 I, 3.
70 I, 7.
71 I, 13.
72 I, 29.
73 I, 31.
74 III, 17.
75 208.
76 464.

CHAPTER III

1 See Meinertzhagen, *BA*, 78.
2 *Av.*, 967. Compare 'hair greyer than a swan's', *Vesp.*, 1064. The carrion crow has wandered to northern Greece. See *CFG* II, 108.
3 X, LX, 124.
4 *HA* IX, 606 A 25.
5 *HA* IX, 617 B 13.
6 *BBI* I, 24.
7 *HA* VIII, 593 B 14.
8 609.
9 *De. def. or.* II, 415 C = Hes. *Precepts of Chiron*, 3, p. 74 (Evelyn-White, Loeb).
10 *GA*, 774 B 26.
11 *HA* VI, 564 A 15.
12 *HA* VI, 563 B 11.
13 I, 10.

14 I, 8. Compare Ael. III, 9.
15 Ael. III, 9. *Cyranid.*, 12 (Ruelle).
16 *Op.*, 747.
17 *HA* IX, 617 B 13.
18 Ravens were very plentiful near the Menelaion in April 1965. For one at Argos see *JS*, 109.
19 *HA* IX, 606 A 24.
20 II, 48.
21 *HA* IX, 617 B 14; *Mir. Ausc.*, 842 B 12.
22 *HA* III, 519 A 6.
23 *A.P.* XI, 417 'Why do you try to see a white raven?'
24 833.
25 *Ag.*, 1473.
26 *Av.*, 582. Compare *Ach.*, 92.
27 751.
28 *Sign.* VI, 1, 16. Aelian also comments on its variety of tone II, 51.
29 Plin. X, 60.
30 *GA*, 756 B 13.
31 I, 9.
32 Quoted by Plutarch, *De. def. or.* II, 415 C.
33 506.
34 *HA* IX, 618 B 13.
35 III, 43.
36 *Il.* XVI, 583, XVII, 755.
37 *Eth. Nic.*, 1155 A 34 etc.
38 *Nemean* III, 142 (82)
39 Ar. *Eq.*, 1020; *A.P.* VII, 713.
40 See *JS*, 150. The Greek jackdaw is distinguished as *corvus monedula soemmerringi*. (Harrison & Pateff, *Ibis*, July 1937, 584.)
41 *Runaways*, 30.
42 e.g. Cicero, *Fl.*, 31. 'you ought no more to be trusted with gold than a jackdaw'; Ov. *Met.* VII, 467 of the greedy Arne who was transformed into a daw.
43 *HA* IX, 617 B 17.
44 Aesch. *Supp.*, 751; *A.P.* XI, 323. See Chap. I, n. 25.
45 Ael. XVII, 16; Arist. *Mir. Ausc.*, 841 B 30.
46 Ael. III, 12.
47 *Av.*, 232. Flocks of rooks were seen in company with daws on Lemnos in the winter of 1916. Boyd, *Zoologist* XX (1916), 129. It nests sparingly in eastern Macedonia and Thrace *CFG* II, 107.
48 579
49 Plut. *Demetr.*, 28.
50 Ath., 398 D.
51 Ath., 344 C.
52 *HA* IX, 592 B 28.
53 Ath., 391 F.
54 *Il.* II, 308 f.
55 *Fr.* I.
56 By the Pistoxenos painter (*c.* 460 BC). Taken for a goose by some, e.g. Armstrong, *FB*, 45 and pl. 11.
57 Ath., 391 F.
58 Hdt. I, 159
59 Ael. *VH* V, 17.
60 *HA* VIII, 592 B 16
61 *HA* III, 509 A 7, 23.
62 Quoted by Ath., 392 A.
63 *HA* IX, 613 A 29
64 Ath., 391 F.
65 *HA* IX, 633 B 1.
66 Ath., 363 C.
67 *HA* V, 539 B 33.
68 *GA*, 774 B 29.
69 Ath., 391 F.
70 Ath., 392 A.
71 *CR* I (1891). For crag martins, red-rumped swallows, swallows and house martins at Delphi see Géroudet, *Nos Oiseaux* XXVI (1962), 174.
72 Ael. I, 52.
73 *Op.*, 568.
74 *Fr.*, 74 (Loeb).
75 800.
76 419.
77 153.
78 II. 22.
79 *HA* III, 519 A 6.
80 *HA* I, 487 B 26.
81 *HA* VI, 563 A 13, VIII, 592 B 16.
82 *HA* IX, 618 A 32.
83 *HA*, 612 B 23. For the distinction between the nests of the swallow and house martin see Arnott, *G & R* (1967), 52.
84 XIV, 39.
85 *A.P.* X, 16.
86 *A.P.* X, 2.
87 III, 25.
88 *HA* V, 544 A 26, VI, 563 A 14.
89 Ael. I, 35.
90 Ael. II, 3; Phile, 454.
91 See *GGB*, 317.
92 *Fr.*, 43A & B (Edmonds, Loeb).
93 *Fr.*, 288 (Edmonds, Loeb).
94 Ath., 621 F.
95 Aesch. *Ag.*, 1050.
96 1681.
97 680.
98 *Fr.*, 27 (Paton, Loeb).
99 *Fr.*, 208 (Paton, Loeb).
100 Iambl. *Protr.*, 119, 4.
101 *HA* IX, 618 A 31.
102 Philoponus (6th c. AD) a commentator on Aristotle *HA* IX, 618 A 30 mistook it for a bat. It was this characteristic that attracted the attention to a bird flying up and down the Street of the Knights in Rhodes in May 1965. For its characteristic slow flight see Bannerman, *BC*, 156.
103 *HA* I, 487 B 24. Tunnicliffe describes graphically their restless flight (*Shorelands Summer Diary*, 106). Meinertzhagen denies that they sleep on the wing

(*BA*, 282). The pallid swift has been recorded throughout Greece and as a sporadic breeder (*CFG* II, 87).

104 *HA* IX, 618 A 30.

105 See *JS*, 115.

106 *HA* I, 487 B 27 Meinertzhagen observed a large flock in Yemen 'after a heavy rainstorm', *BA*, 281.

107 1116.

108 *HA* IX, 617 A 20.

109 Clem. Al. *Paed.* II, 196.

110 *HA* IX, 617 A 32.

111 *HA* IX, 632 B 18 except for the difference between the song and alarm note.

112 *Av.*, 591.

113 *HA* VI, 559 A 5.

114 Ath., 65 A.

115 *HA* VIII, 600 A 25.

116 Od. XXII, 468.

117 *HA* IX, 614 B 8. Hesychius identified the *brenthos* with the blackbird. Aristotle described the *brenthos* both as a song (615 A 15) and sea (609 A 23) bird. See Chap. VI, n. 9.

118 *HA* IX, 617 A 15.

119 *HA* IX, 617 B 27.

120 *HA* IX, 632 B 14

121 I, 27.

122 *Epigr.* IV, 10 (*A.P.* IX, 437).

123 *HA* V, 544 A 26.

124 *HA* IX, 616 A 3

125 Paus. VIII, 17, 3. See Frazer *ad loc.*

126 *HA* IX, 617 A 13. *Mir. Ausc.*, 831 B 14.

127 *GGB*, 175. The snowfinch (*montifringilla nivalis*) has been recorded from Parnassus (1962). *CFG* II, 138.

128 *HA* IX, 632 B 28. The Balkan race (*erithacus rubecula balcanicus*) nests in Greece. See *CGF* II, 127.

129 *HA* VIII, 592 B 22. Ehrenberg's Redstart (*phoenicurus phoenicurus samamisicus*) also occurs as a bird of passage. See *CGF* II, 127.

130 See Armstrong, *FB*, 167 f.

131 Philagrius Medicus quoted by Aetius XI, 11.

132 *HA* IX, 615 A 19. According to Aesop when the birds agreed that the one which flew highest should be king the wren hid among the eagle's feathers and flew higher still (Plutarch, 806 E). See also Ar. *Av.*, 568

133 E. A. Armstrong, *FB*, 141 f., 177.

134 *HA* VIII, 592 B 23.

135 *HA* VIII, 592 B 18. For great, blue and sombre tits at Delphi see Géroudet, *Nos Oiseaux* XXVI (1962a), 176 f.

136 Apostolius, *Par. Gr.* II, 259. But Apostolius is confusing the tit with the nightjar.

137 *HA* IX, 616 A 5.

138 *HA* VIII, 592 B 16.

139 *HA* IX, 626 A 7; Ael. I, 58; Phile, 651; *Gp.* XV, 2, 18.

140 *HA* IX, 616 B 2.

141 *BBI* I, 143.

142 *HA* II, 504 A 11.

143 *HA* VIII, 592 B 18.

144 *HA* IX, 617 A 25.

145 *HA* VIII, 592 B 17.

146 *HA* IX, 613 B 3. The chaffinch is common in all suitable localities (e.g. Delphi, see A. Suchantke, 'Delphische Ornithologie', *Kosmos*, 61 (1965), 122) including mountains during the autumn migration (see Bateson and Nisbet, *Ibis* 103 (1961), 513). I saw it in Rhodes in April 1955.

147 *HA* IX, 617 B 26. Various races occur in the Balkan peninsula. The Greek starling is intermediate between *sturnus vulgaris vulgaris* and *sturnus vulgaris balcanicus*. (Harrison and Pateff, *Ibis*, July 1937, 592).

148 *P.A.* VII, 172, IX, 373.

149 *Il.* XVI, 582.

150 *Il.* XVII, 755.

151 e.g. among the ruins of Tiryns. See *JS*, 110.

152 Antiphon, 3, 96.

153 *HA* IX, 619 B 19.

154 *Av.*, 589.

155 *HA* IX, 609 A 13.

156 760.

157 Lucr. VI, 751; Ael. V, 8.

158 *Av.*, 357 f. The reason why owls should avoid pots is obscure. One ancient commentator suggested that owls being the emblem of Athens naturally feared the Athenians Euelpides and Peisthetaerus. But this ignores the pots as irrelevant. The rhetorician Pollux refers to a game known as Chytrinda in which one player known as the Pot sat in the centre while the rest ran round 'plucking and scratching him'. If the 'Pot' caught one of his tormentors the latter became 'Pot' in turn. For other suggestions see Rogers, *Birds*, note to line 358.

159 *Fr.* (Pearson).

160 Ar. *Pax*, 1099, *Av.*, 865, 892.

161 Ael. II, 47. But they never touched sacrifices offered to Zeus.

162 Jackson, *BK.*, vol. I, 168.

163 I, 7.
164 *BA*, 372. For a black kite near Delphi see Géroudet, *Nos Oiseaux* 26 (1962a), 173.
165 II, 22.
166 *HA* VIII, 592 B 4.
167 *HA* VI, 563 A 30. The redkite has not been proved to nest in Greece in modern times. *CGF* II, 42. The black kite (*milvus migrans*) passes through.
168 *HA* VIII, 600 A 12.
169 See *JS*, 97 f. The kestrel like red-footed falcon (*falco vespertinus*) is a regular bird of passage in spring (*CFG* II, 53).
170 *HA* VI, 558 B 29.
171 Coward, *BBI* I, 344.
172 Arist. *GA*, 750 A 7.
173 II, 43.
174 589.

CHAPTER IV

For birds of open country observed recently in Greece see Bateson and Nisbet, 'Autumn Migration in Greece', *Ibis* 103 (1961), 509 f.; Raines, The distribution of birds in northeast Greece in summer', *Ibis* 104 (1962), 490 f.; Steinfatt, O: 'Vogelkündliche Beobachtungen in Attika', *J. Orn.* 95 (1954–55), 22 f. and 254 f.; 96, 92 f.; Collmann and Croxall, 'Spring migration at the Bosphorus', *Ibis* 109 (1967), 359 f.

1 They were plentiful at Platamon in the May of 1965. The local stationmaster amused himself by mocking a nightingale singing late one night in a bush on the platform. The thrush nightingale (luscinia luscinia) occurs on passage (*CFG* II, 128).
2 673.
3 *Od.* XIX, 518. 'Olive' or 'greenish' describes the nightingale's drab appearance, if that is the true significance of an epithet which appears nowhere else, though Simonides (*fr.* 73) describes the nightingale as 'green-necked' See Warde Fowler, *CR* (1890), 50, 231.
4 At Platamon I noted that most birds stopped singing after dark.
5 *Frs* 8, 9 (Edmonds, Loeb).
6 209 f.
7 242.
8 *YB*, 163 f.
9 *HA* VI, 536 A 29
10 *HA* VI, 536 B 17.
11 I, 20.
12 *HA* IX, 632 B 20.
13 XII, 28.
10 *HA* IX, 632 B 26.
15 *HA* V, 542 B 26.
16 Theoc. XV, 121 f.
17 Heard near Dafni in April. It is better known as a bird of passage than as a parasite. (*CFG* II, 83).
18 *Op.*, 484.
19 505 f.
20 *HA* VI, 563 B 14.
21 Revealed most recently by Jeffery Boswall, *Private Life of the Cuckoo*, which was televised on 31 July 1975.
22 The text says 'pigeon'.
23 *HA* VI, 563 B 29.
24 *HA* IX, 618 A 9.
25 III, 30.
26 830 B 11.
27 Coward, *BBI* I, 269.
28 *HA* VI, 563 B 18.
29 *HA* IX, 633 A 11.
30 *Caus. Pl.* II, 1, 7.
31 *HA* I, 488 B 3.
32 See *JS*, 125.
33 X, 4.
34 *Av.*, 32.
35 227.
36 *HA* VI, 616 B 1.
37 *HA* VI, 559 A 8. It now apparently only nests in the north of Greece (*CFG* II, 90) and is commonly a bird of passage.
38 *Av.*, 642.
39 *HA* IX, 616 A 35.
40 III, 26.
41 A nest I examined in Kenya was filled with a mixture of ordure and vomit. See *Ibis* 88 (1946), 521.
42 See *JS*, 84. It nests more regularly in north and central Greece. (*CFG* II, 89).
43 *HA* IX, 615 B 28.
44 *HA* VI, 559 A 3.
45 *HA* IX, 615 B 30.
46 *HA* IX, 626 A 9.
47 Ael. I, 49.
48 *HA* IX, 615 B 25.
49 *HA* IX, 614 A 35.
50 *HA* VIII, 593 A 8. Nowadays it is rare in the south. (*CFG* II, 91).
51 *HA* IX, 610 A 9.
52 *HA* VIII, 593 A 1; Arnott thinks the larger pipo was the middle spotted woodpecker which is apparently common in Lesbos, where Aristotle worked, according to Löhrl, *Die Vogelwelt* 86 (1965), 302 f. See 'Some Peripatetic Birds' (to be published).
53 *HA* IX, 617 A 28.
54 e.g. Lycoph., 476, where Tzetzes comments 'The pipo is a lovely seabird'.
55 *HA* II, 504 A 11. It is said to be resident in northern Epirus and to occur on passage elsewhere in Greece (*CFG* II, 90). For wrynecks in Kythera

see Vaughan, *Ibis* 102 (1960), 87.
56 VI, 19.
57 I, 23.
58 *HA* IX, 617 B 20 The resident skylark is distinguished as *alauda arvensis cantarella* and the woodlark as *lullula arborea pallida*. The typical races are winter visitors (*CFG* II, 96–97).
59 *HA* IX, 615 B 32.
60 *HA* IX, 633 B 1.
61 *HA* IX, 614 A 33.
62 *HA* IX, 633 B 1.
63 *HA* VI, 559 A 1.
64 *HA* IX, 618 A 10.
65 *Cyranid.* Plut. *Praec.*, 809 B. Its crest was proverbial.
66 VII, 141.
67 *A.P.* IX, 380.
68 *HA* IX, A 7, B 27.
69 III, 15.
70 *HA* VI, 559 A 12.
71 *HA* VI 559 A 2.
72 *HA* VI, 564 A 2, IX, 618 A 10. Most pipits are birds of passage in Greece. The tawny and water pipit (*anthus spinoletta*) nest in the far north, the tree sporadically (CFG II, 97 f.).
73 *HA* IX, 617 A 28.
74 *HA* IX, 616 B 11.
75 In April 1965.
76 IV, 47.
77 X, 50.
78 *HA* IX, 609 B 10. This is a curious doublet on the Phoenix myth for which see Chap. X.
79 *HA* IX, 618 B 2. It is a bird of passage in Greece (*CFG* II, 86). The southern European form (*caprimulgus europaeus meridionalis*) nests in north and central Greece.
80 III, 39.
81 XV, 2, 18.
82 *HA* IX, 616 B 22.
83 *HA* IX, 609 B 11–17.
84 *HA* VIII, 593 A 12. See Arnott, 'Some Peripatetic Birds' (to be published).
85 *HA* IX, 616 B 28.
86 *HA* IX, 617 A 23 Recorded as nesting on Olympus and Parnassus (*CFG* II, 136).
87 IV, 59.
88 *HA* IX, 617 A 15.
89 A pair with young were encountered above the Kaki-Skala in April 1965.
90 *HA* VIII, 592 B 30. The linnet is only a sporadic nester in northern Greece. It is a common winter passage migrant (*CFG* II, 141).
91 *HA* VIII, 593 A 12.
92 See under Akanthylis
93 *HA* IX, 616 B 31.
94 Schol. Theoc. VII, 171.
95 *A.P.*, V, 292.
96 VII, 141.
97 19.
98 X, 32.
99 *HA* VIII, 592 B 17.
100 *HA* IX, 615 B 32. The resident Greek greenfinch is *chloris aurantiiventris*. *Chloris chloris* is a passage migrant (*CFG* II, 140).
101 IV, 87.
102 See *GGB*, 58.
103 *HA* VIII, B 30. The Greek race is *carduelis carduelis balcanica*, with *niediecki* breeding in the Sporades and *carduelis carduelis loudoni* recorded from the Cyclades (*CFG* II, 140).
104 III, 2.
105 *HA* IX, 609 A 6.
106 *HA* VIII, 592 B 21.
107 *HA* IX, 632 B 32.
108 Ath., 65 B.
109 *Od.* V, 66.
110 I, 134.
111 *HA* VIII, 592 B 11.
112 Ath., 391 B; Ael., XV, 28.
113 *HA* IX, 617 B 31.
114 *HA* VIII, 597 B 23.
115 *HA* VIII, 592 B 8.
116 *HA* IX, 619 B 18.
117 *HA* IX, 615 B 19.
118 *HA* IX, 617 A 20.
119 Alexis, *fr.*, 92 (Edmonds, Loeb).
120 V, 136.
121 215 (Rose).
122 *HA* IX, 617 B 16.
123 See *JS*, 186 and 201.
124 *HA* IX, 617 B 16.
125 X, 48.
126 *HA* VIII, 592 B 26.
127 *HA* V, 544 B 6.
128 *HA* V, 544 B 1.
129 *Il.* XXI, 494.
130 *Il.* V, 778.
131 *Il.* XI, 634.
132 *HA* V, 544 B 6.
133 *HA* V, 544 B 1.
134 Evans, *PM* I, 632 f.
135 *Il.* XV, 238.
136 *HA* V, 544 B 5.
137 Ath., 394 A.
138 Schol. Theoc. V, 96.
139 *HA* IX, 613 A 16.
140 *HA* XIII, 597 B 3.
141 *HA* IX, 600 A 24.
142 *HA* IX, 633 A 6.
143 *HA* VI, 562 B 28.
144 *GA*, 774 B 26.
145 I, 55. The stock dove has been recorded as a spring visitor to Jannina as well as Parnassus (*CFG* II, 81).
146 *HA* VIII, 593 A 16.
147 *HA* V, 544 B 7.
148 Ath., 394 A.
149 *HA* VIII, 593 A 15.
150 *HA* VIII, 600 A 19.
151 *HA* VIII, 597 B 7.
152 Ath., 394 E.
153 *HA* IX, 613 A 13.
154 VII, 141.
155 *HA* VI, 558 B 24.
156 *HA* VI, 562 B 5.
157 *HA* IX, 613 A 14; Ael. III, 44, X 33.

158 *HA* IX, 613 A 22.
159 *HA* IX, 617 A 32. For the present status of the grey shrikes in eastern Europe see Bourne, *Ibis* 102 (1960), 476, (and Vaughan, ibid. 91).
160 *HA* IX, 617 B 6.
161 Coward, *BBI* I, 149.
162 *HA*, 617 B 9.
163 See *GGB*, 154–55.
164 I, 22.
165 *HA* IX, 633 A 14, Meinertzhagen distinguished a separate race of the common wheatear (*oenanthe oenanthe virago*) in the Sporades, Cyclades and Crete (*CFG* II, 125).
166 1965. 'Observed at Delphi' by Géroudet, *Nos Oiseaux* XXVI, (1962a), 173. For the races and present distribution of the rock partridges see Watson, 'Three sibling species of Alectoris partridges', *Ibis* 104 (1962), 353 f.; 'Sympatry in Palaearctic Alectoris Partridges', *Evolution* XVI (1962), 11 f. Watson distinguishes between the rock (*Alectoris graeca graeca*) and chukar (*Alectoris chukar kleini*) partridges. The latter in found in Crete and on the Aegean islands and has a distinctive note but since their ranges do not overlap it seems unlikely that the difference of note mentioned by the ancient authorities could have referred to these two species. See n. 176.
167 *HA* IX, 613 B 23.
168 Ath., 389 E; Arist. *HA* V, 541 A 27, VI, 560 B 13; Ael. XVII, 15.
169 *Cyn.* (On Hunting), II, 405.
170 Aristotle quoted by Athenaeus, 389 A; *HA* IX, 613 A 24; VI, 563 A 2 (16 years).
171 *HA* IX, 613 B 7; Ael. X, 35.
172 *HA* VI, 564 A 21.
173 Aristotle quoted by Athenaeus, 389 B; Ael. III, 5.
174 *HA* IX, 613 B 14.
175 Ath., 390 AB. Korydallos lay on the Boeotian side of Athens and the notes of Boeotian partridges were distinct from those of Attic birds (Ath., 390 C.) The fertile plain of Boeotia would have suited the common partridge, which apparently survived there until recent times (see *GGB*, 235). The lyric poet Alcman (7th c. B C) knew the partridge as 'Caccabis' (quoted by Athenaeus in the same passage). The common partridge is now only a sporadic nester in northern Greece. *CFG* II, 56. It was formerly common in Epirus (Powys, *Ibis* V, 1860).
176 *HA* IV, 536 B 13. The note of the common partridge 'krrr-ic' or 'kar-wic' would appear to correspond to 'caccabe' and that of the rock partridge 'whit-whit-whit' or 'pitchi-i' to tittybe'. See Peterson Mountfort and Hollom, *FG*, 98 and 100. It is Arnott's view that the two species were the rock partridge and chukar. See 'Some Peripatetic Birds' (to be published).
177 i.e. The sand partridge (*ammoperdix bonhami*).
178 Schol. Ar. *Av.*, 250, the francolin which inhabits the plain of Marathon. For the francolin feeds in marshy and swampy places. This is not, however, invariably the case in modern Cyprus (Bannerman, 369). For its present status in S. E. Turkey (Gaziantep) see Warnke, *Die Vogelwelt* 86 (1965), 19; for its former status see Kumerloeve, *Die Vogelwelt* 84 (1963) 129–36.
179 Ath., 387 F.
180 *HA* IX, 617 B 25.
181 *HA* IX, 633 B 1.
182 IV, 42.
183 Athen., 388 A.
184 ibid.
185 *HA* IX, 613 B 7, 614 A 26, VI, 559 A.
186 Ath., 392 C.
187 *HA* VIII, 597 A 23; Athen., 392 C. A large number of quails came aboard a ship in the Aegean N. of Scyros on Sept. 27. See Casement, *Ibis* 108 (1966), 461 f.
188 I, 30.
189 *HA* VIII, 597 B 16.
190 *HA* VIII, 597 B 20.
191 Ath., 393 A.
192 ibid.
193 *Av.*, 870. The priest prays to 'Quail Leto' because the goddess bore Apollo and Artemis on the Quail Island – Ortygia, i.e. Delos.
194 II, 76.
195 e.g. Arist. *HA* IX, 616 B 20, 609 B 9.
196 Schol. Ar. *Av.*, 1138 'A bird of ill-omen for married folk, with a very sharp saw-like bill'.
197 1138. Perhaps from the rasping sound of its call.
198 *HA* IX, 614 B 35.
199 265.
200 *HA* IX, 617 B 23.
201 *HA* IX, 614 A 33.

CHAPTER V
1 *Il.* II, 460, XV, [illegible]

2 *HA* I, 488 A 3
3 *HA* VIII, 597 B 29.
4 *HA* VIII, 593 B 16.
5 *HA* IX, 615 A 32; Athen., 393 D. Under the latter reference Aristotle describes the swan as 'belligerent and prone to mutual slaughter', a charge which he repeats in *HA* IX, 610 A 2. Aelian (XVII, 24) also describes them as peaceful unless provoked.
6 *HA* IX, 615 B 2.
7 *Vesp.*, 1064.
8 *Il.* II, 460.
9 *Il* XV, 692.
10 *Il.* XVII, 460.
11 *HA* VIII, 593 B 22.
12 *HA* VIII, 597 B 30.
13 *HA* V, 29.
14 *HA* VIII, 593 B 22.
15 V, 30.
16 XI, 38, X, 16.
17 I, 53.
18 Ath., 58 B.
19 *HA* VIII, 593 B 16.
20 *HA* II, 509 A 4.
21 Ath., 395 C.
22 1148.
23 *Fr.*, 4 (Edmonds, Loeb), Ath., 388 E.
24 *Fr.* 141 (Edmonds, Loeb).
25 Schol. *Av.*, 1302.
26 See *Phoinikolegnon*.
27 Ath., 395 C.
28 X, 45. See Meinertzhagen, *BA*, 31. The glossy ibis has been reported breeding in the Louros delta in central Greece (*CFG* II, 32).
29 *HA* IX, 617 B 29.
30 II, 75.
31 XVII, 2, 4.
32 See Roberts, *TBSA*, 31.
33 X, 29.
34 *HA* IX, 609 B 22.
35 *HA* IX, 616 B 33. The diminutive little bittern (*ixobrychus minutus*) breeds regularly throughout Greece (*CFG* II, 29).
36 II, 8. The little egret breeds in central Greece, but is otherwise, like the great white heron, a bird of passage. (*CFG* II, 31.) The squacco heron (*ardeola ralloides*) is also a local breeder.
37 *HA* IX, 609 B 14.
38 Jackson, *BK* I, 47. But see Meinertzhagen, *BA*, 404. The cattle egret is now apparently only a vagrant to Greece. (*CFG* 11, 30).
39 V, 35.
40 271. The flamingo has been recorded most recently from the Evros delta in 1968 and from the delta of the Haliacmon in 1967 (*CGF* II, 150)
41 See Toynbee, *ARL*, 246.
42 Quoted by Athenaeus, 388 C.D. The latest record was in the Nestos delta in eastern Macedonia in 1965 (*CFG* II, 61).
43 *HA* II, 509 A 10.
44 III, 42.
45 Quoted by Athenaeus, 388 D.
46 ibid, 388 G.
47 I, 29.
48 Ath., 388 D.
49 *Cyranid.* 99 (Ruelle). See *GGB* 298.
50 *Fr.*, 273, 1527 B.
51 Ath., 395 E.
52 Ath., 395 D.
53 II, 12.
54 II, 13. For the *dytinos* and Thracian bird see Anderson, *JHS* XCII (1972), 171.
55 79.
56 II, 68.
57 *HA* IX, 612 A 21.
58 XII, 15.
59 II, 9.
60 X, 64.
61 See Coward, *BBI* II, 179.
62 See Chandler, *Divided Land* 179 and note 16 to ch. 6. It breeds in the gulf of Arta (*CFG* II, 32).
63 *HA* VIII, 593 B 2.
64 At Cape Sunium in 1965.
65 *HA* VIII, 593 B 6.
66 *HA* IX, 615 A 20.
67 XII, 9.

CHAPTER VI

1 *HA* VIII, 593 B 4, 14.
2 *HA* V, 542 B 17, 19. Confusion with the tern is suggested by Apuleius, *Met.* V, 28. 'And now that white bird, known as the "gavia", which floats over the sea waves swiftly plunges into the Ocean's deep bosom.' See Arnott, *CQ* (1964), 261.
3 II, 4.
4 III, 2, quoting Eudemus of Rhodes (4th c. B C), the pupil of Aristotle.
5 II, 6. For shearwaters in south-east Europe see Nisbet, and Smout, *BB* 50 (1957), 201 f.
6 See Aithyia, *Cyranid.* 86 (Ruelle).
7 *Od.* VI, 51.
8 *A.P.* (Paton, Loeb), VII, 285, etc. 'He has died at sea, his bones, I wot, are rotting, only the shearwaters know and could tell.' So sailors are likened to 'diving shearwaters' by Aratus (*Phaen.*, 296).
9 *HA* V, 542 B 17. Arnott equates the aithyia (Latin *mergus*) with the cormorant or shag. He suggests that the brenthos (*HA* IX, 609 A 23), which was identified by Hesychius as a 'blackbird' and elsewhere by Aristotle (*HA* IX, 615 A

15) as a woodland and mountain song bird, might also have been a name for the smaller shearwaters. See *CQ* (1964), 249 f.
10 Dion. II, 5.
11 Dion. II, 2.
12 See Anderson, *JHS* XCII (1972), 171
13 *Od.* XV, 478.
14 *Od.* XV, 478, 'a bird resembling a swallow. Some call it a gull (laros) others a shearwater (*aithyia*).'
15 *HA* VIII, 593 B 17.
16 Chandler mentions pelicans, spoonbills and storks at the mouth of the Axios (see *Divided Land*, 179).
17 *HA* VIII, 597 A 9.
18 *HA* IX, 614 B 27.
19 See Meinertzhagen, *BA*, 430.
20 II, 6.

CHAPTER VII

1 See Suchantke, 'Delphische Ornithologie', *Kosmos* 61 (1965), 124 f.; Géroudet, 'Notes d'ornithologie grecque; Delphes', *Nos Oiseaux* XXVI (1962), 169 f.
2 See Géroudet, 'Notes d'ornithologie grecque: Les Météores', *Nos Oiseaux* XXVI (1963), 137. I observed many large vultures in 1966, some of which may have been black vultures.
3 Vultures were observed by me at the Vale of Tempe in May 1965.
4 *HA* IX, 618 B 11–619 A 3.
5 *HA* X, 619 A 4. An eyrie was robbed on the Luros near Nicopolis in 1857 (Powys, *Ibis* II, 1860). Seen near Alexandroupolis (Harrison and Pateff, *Ibis* 14, 1, 1937); on Bosporus (Collman and Croxall, *Ibis* 109, 1967).
6 *HA* X, 620 A 20.
7 *Nem.* V, 21.
8 *Fr.*, 637.
9 Ar. *Av.*, 1337.
10 *HA*, 619 A 8. A large eagle with a white head, which suggested an imperial rather than a golden eagle, was observed flying at eye-level down the Pleistus gorge at Delphi in June 1949. See *JS*, 57.
11 II, 39. The lammergeyer's habit of threatening potential victims (including human beings) when in difficulties on a precipitous mountain slope is vividly described by Meinertzhagen, *BA*, 361 f. Bruce termed the lammergeyer the 'Golden Eagle' in Abyssinia. See *GGB*, 5.
12 *HA* IX, 619 A 14. In Homer it attacks hares (*Il.* XVII, 674), lambs (*Il.* XXII, 308), snakes (*Il.* XII, 201), tame geese (*Od.* XV, 160, XIX, 536), doves (*Od.* XX, 242), wild geese, cranes and swans (*Il.* XV, 692). See *GGB*, 174 f.
13 *HA* VI, 563 A 17.
14 *HA* VIII, 601 B 3, where Aristotle quotes Hesiod (some MSS read Herodotus) who, in his view, was wrong to represent the eagle in the act of drinking.
15 VIII, 17, 3.
16 See Suchantke, 'Delphische Ornithologie', *Kosmos* 65 (1965), part 3, 127 f. For the lammergeyer at Delphi see also Géroudet, 'Notes d'ornithologie grecque: Delphes', *Nos Oiseaux* XXVI (1962), 171 f.
17 I, 4.
18 Ael. VII, 16. See my article, 'The Lammergeyer', *G & R* XVI (1947), 46, 23 ff. It is still found in Sicily and Crete.
19 *HA* VIII, 592 B 6.
20 *HA* IX, 620 A.
21 II, 46. Ai-gypios – 'goat-vulture' suggests 'lamb-vulture'. But the Ancients were confused about the bird's habits and imagined it attacked live prey. See n. 24 below.
22 *Od.* XVI, 216; Aesch. *Ag*, 49.
23 For a lammergeyer's eyrie see my article in the *Ibis*, January 1947, 120 ff.
24 In *Il.* XVII, 460, it attacks geese. In *Od.* XXII, 302, it attacks birds.
25 Hes. *Sc.*, 405 f.
26 *Il.* IV, 237, XI, 162, XVI, 836, XXII, 42, *Od.* XI, 578, XXII, 30, etc. *Hdt.* I, 140, describes how the Persians exposed their dead to the vultures. Aelian says the same of the Vaccaei in N.W. Spain (X, 22). Tibetans also follow this practice. See Chapman, *Memoirs of a Mountaineer*, 315.
27 Phile 3.
28 *HA* VIII, 592 B 5. Aristophanes places the *Nertos* with the vulture and hawk (*Av.*, 303). It is the Egyptian word -nr-t – for vulture and possibly identical with the Egyptian vulture. See *GGB*, 205. Hesychius also defines *Torgos* as 'a kind of bloodthirsty Sicilian vulture' which was probably the black vulture.
29 II, 46.

30 *HA* VI, 563 A 5.
31 I, 5.
32 See *CFG* II, 51.
33 *Il.* XXI, 493.
34 *Il.* XVI, 582; XVII, 757. A. B. Cook (*Zeus* I, 242) identified the *kirkos* with the gyrfalcon, which is not, however, known to visit Greece.
35 *HA* IX, 620 A 17.
36 *HA* VI, 563 B 15–24.
37 *HA* VI, 563 A 30.
38 IX, 615 A 3.
39 *GA*, 746 B 2.
40 *Il.* XIV, 290.
41 *HA* IX, 615 B 6.
42 *HA* IX, 615 B 4; Rogers, *Birds* xxix.
43 *HA* VIII, 592 B 29.

CHAPTER VIII

1 *Halieutica* (On Fishing), I, 621. Cranes are still regular passage migrants in spring through Greece. See *CFG* II, 58.
2 II, 22.
3 *HA* VIII, 597 A 4. Cranes winter in N. Africa and the Sudan. See Moreau, *Ibis* 95, no. 2 (1953), 246 f.
4 *Il.* III, 3. 'They first appeared on October 13th and 14th in huge flocks and very high, though their loud clanging note . . . was very distinctly audible.' Buxton, *Zoologist* XX (1916), 416.
5 *Ilios*, 113. For local movements see Warde Fowler, *CR* XXXII (1918), 65 f. For cranes in modern Anatolia see Kumerloeve, *BZB* (1961), 1 f.
6 *Op.* 448. Compare *Th.* 197; Ar. *Av.*, 710.
7 II, 1. Cranes nested in the Evros delta in 1965. See *CFG* II, 58.
8 III, 13.
9 *HA* VIII, 597 B 1.
10 *Av.*, 1137 and *Schol.*, 1429.
11 *HA* IX, 614 B 18.
12 *HA* IX, 615 B 18.
13 *HA* V, 539 B 31.
14 Aristotle describes the crane as 'ashy' in colour (*HA* III, 519 A 2) which would suit either race.
15 *Hel.*, 1487 f.
16 See *JS*, 44.
17 *Ilios*, 113.
18 III, 23.
19 Plut. *Luc.* XXXIX, 'Then', said Lucullus to Pompey, 'you credit me with less intelligence than the cranes and storks in that I do not change my habitat with the seasons.'
20 Aristotle thought it hibernated. *HA* VIII, 600 A 21.
21 See *BK* I, 68–69.
22 Aris. *Mir. Ausc.*, 832 A 15.
23 *HA* IX, 619 B 13. But no recent records. See *CFG* II, 59.
24 Quoted by Athenaeus, 390 F.
25 ibid.
26 Alexander of Myndos quoted by Athenaeus, 393 D.
27 Ael. II, 28; Dion. III, 8.
28 Oppian, *Cynegetica* (on Hunting) II, 406.
29 *Anab.* I, 5.
30 Ath., 390 D. Xenophon comments favourably on its flesh which, according to Galen (De alim. 3) was midway between that of cranes and geese.
31 See Meinertzhagen, *BA*, 573 f.
32 IV, 175.
33 I, 5, 2.
34 *PA*, 697 B 14–26.
35 IX, 31.
36 Xen. *Anab.* I, 5, 2; Diod. III, 28, 3.
37 *HA* IX, 616 B 5. But several hens sometimes occupy one nest. See Jackson, BK I, 7.
38 Ar., *Ach.* 1105, 1118; Theophr. *HP* IV, 4, 5.
39 Ath., 200 F.

CHAPTER IX

1 *Od.* XIX, 536–52.
2 *Od.* XV, 161.
3 *Fr.*, 866 (Pearson).
4 *Grg.*, 471 C.
5 *Politicus*, 264 C.
6 XIV, 22.
7 *HA* II, 499 A 27.
8 *HA* VI, 560 B 10; *GA* III, 2, 753 A 34.
9 *Mir. Ausc.*, 800 B 23.
10 *HA* VI, 563 A 29, 564 A 10.
11 Eriphus in Ath., 58 B.
12 Payne, *Necrocorinthia*, fig. 21, 74.
13 864.
14 *Av.*, 483. See also 277, 708.
15 *GA*, 749 B.
16 487.
17 *HA* II, 504 B 9.
18 759.
19 *Ol.* XII, 20.
20 *Ag.*, 1671.
21 *HA* IX, 631 B 9; Ael. V, 5.
22 *HA* VI, 631 B 14.
23 *HA* VI, 558 B 12.
24 *HA* VI, 560 B 4.
25 *HA* VI, 560 A 1.
26 *Tht.*, 164 C.
27 *HA* VI, 558 B 15.
28 *HA* VI, 558 B 17.
29 IX, 22, 4.
30 *Geog.* VII, 2, 33.
31 *Fr.*, 57.3.
32 XVI, 2.
33 864.
34 XVIII, 57.
35 Ath., 394 E.
36 *Tht.*, 197 C.

37 XIV, 6.
38 *HA* I, 488 A 4.
39 *GA*, 749 B 12.
40 *HA* VIII, 593 A 16.
41 *HA* IX, 633 B 4.
42 *HA* IX, 613 A 18.
43 Pollux V, 13.
44 *HA* IX, 620 A 29; Ael. V, 50.
45 *Col.*, 793 A 15.
46 *On Drunkenness*, 173 (Colson & Whitaker, Loeb), III, 409.
47 *HA* VI, 560 B 26.
48 *HA* VI, 563 A 3; *GA*, 749 B 18 etc.; Ath., 394 C.
49 *HA* VI, 562 B 14, 26.
50 Ael. III, 45, quoting Aristotle who does not say so, though he mentions the male's concern (*HA* IX, 613 A).
51 Aris. *HA*, 613 A 1.
52 *Cyn.* I, 354.
53 *HA*, 612 B 32.
54 Ath., 395 B.
55 *Elegy and Iambus* II, *Anacrontea*, no. 15, 37 (Edmonds, Loeb).
56 Ael. *VH* IX, 2.
57 Ar. *Av.*, 707.
58 Ath., 398 A.
59 See *GGB*, 277.
60 Menodotus in Athenaeus, 655 A.
61 Ath., 397 C.
62 Ael. V, 21. Women were bribed with peacocks for Pericles according to Plutarch (*Per.* XIII).
63 63.
64 102.
65 269.
66 Ath., 654 F.
67 Antiphon in Ath., 397 A.
68 V, 21.
69 I, 28.
70 II, 59.
71 i, 16.
72 *The Hall*, 11.
73 Ath., 397 B; *HA* VI, 564 A 25.
74 *HA* VI, 564 B 1.
75 69.
76 Ath., 387 C.
77 Ath., 387 A.
78 Ael. XIII, 18.
79 *HA* IX, 633 B 1.
80 *HA* V, 557 A 12
81 *HA* V, 559 A 25.
82 *HA* IX, 654 C.
83 V, 2, 15.
84 3, 39.
85 Plin. XXXVII, 11.
86 ibid.
87 ibid.
88 Ath., 655 C-F.
89 Ath., 654 C.

CHAPTER X

1 *HA*, 616 A 19.
2 *De soll. an.* XXXV.
3 *De am. pr.*, 494 A.
4 IX, 17.
5 *HA* V, 542 B 4–24.
6 *HA* IX, 616 A 14.
7 *HA* VIII, 593 B 8.
8 *HA* VIII, 593 B 12.
9 *Fr.*, 26 (Edmonds, Loeb).
10 250.
11 299. Hesychius defines as 'sexy male bird; some say the halcyon'.
12 VII, 17.
13 *Il.* IX, 562.
14 *A.P.* IX, 363.
15 *Fr.*, 4, 5 (Edmonds, Loeb).
16 See Coward, *BBI* I, 285.
17 Five according to Aristotle, *HA* V, 542 A 17 and in fact 6 or 7.
18 VIII, 22, 4. See Frazer *ad loc.*
19 III, 30.
20 I, 197–99 (Frazer, Loeb).
21 *JHS* XCII (1972), 172.
22 *GGB*, 306. See also Hubaux and Leroy, *Le Mythe du Phénix*; Walla, *Vogel Phoenix*; Broek, *Myth of Phoenix*; Rundle Clark, *UBHJ*, 1949–50, 1–29, 105–40.
23 Plin. VII, 49.
24 II, 73.
25 I, 32.
26 VI, 58.
27 *Life of Apollonius* III, 49, 135.
28 *Ann.* VI, 28.
29 *BA*, 362.
30 VI, 435 A.
31 I, 1.
32 *Mir. Ausc.*, 836 A 9.
33 I, 1.
34 X, 61.
35 See *GGB*, 90, and Warde Fowler, *CR* XXXII (1918), 66 ff.
36 Plin. X, 61.
37 *Periplus*, 21.
38 V, 1.
39 X, 31, 6.
40 III, 111.
41 *HA* IX, 616 A 6. Compare Ael. II, 34.
42 See Thompson, *CQ* XIX (1925), 155 ff. in reply to Lindsay (ibid., 103 f.) who had suggested a tern.
43 II, 14.
44 e.g. Hesychius.

CHAPTER XI

1 Ath., 65 E, 393 C. The latter mentions the 'ten thousand salted coot, five thousand thrushes [tylas, perhaps the same as 'illas' the redwing] and ten thousand salted quail [chennia]' referred to by Cleomenes of Naucratis in a letter to Alexander the Great.
2 Ar. *Av.*, 524 f.
3 III, 13. Modern examples of bird-trapping were described by Brian Jackson in the *Sunday Times* on 26 October 1975 ('Europe's birds run gauntlet of death').
4 III, 15.
5 III, 17.

6 III, 2.
7 III, 4.
8 III, 3.
9 III, 5.
10 III, 7.
11 *HA* IX, 614 A 10.
12 Diod. I, 60.
13 Dion. III, 9.
14 Ath., 393 A.
15 Ath., 393 B.
16 *HA* IX, 613 A 22.
17 III, 1.
18 *Halieutica* I, 31 f.
19 Dion. III, 11.
20 *G* I, 307.
21 *A.P.* VI, 109 (Paton, Loeb).
22 Dion. III, 23
23 Dion. III, 24.
24 *Anab.* I, 5, 2.
25 XIV, 7
26 Ath., 145 D.
27 *Anab.* I, 5, 3.
28 *HA* VIII, 597 B 22.
29 Ael. VII, 34.
30 Dion. III, 20.
31 Dion. III, 22.
32 Plut. II, *de esu carn.* 997 A.
33 Ath., 384 B.
34 Ar. *Av.*, 1077 f.
35 Ar. *Av.*, 529 f., 1585 f.
36 Ath., 386 E.
37 Ath. 387 B.
38 Ar. *Storks.* Ath., 387 F.
39 Ath., 393 D.
40 866.
41 Aeschin. *Against Timarchus*, 53
42 Ar. *Ach.*, 165.
43 Ael. *VH* II, 28.
44 *Anacharsis or Athletics*, 37.
45 Harrison, *Mythology and Monuments of Ancient Athens*, 278. It was however, regarded by Pickard-Cambridge (*Theatre of Dionysus*, 143), as possibly referring to the theatrical contest.
46 Ael. IV, 29.
47 *Av.*, 70.
48 *Schol.* in *Aves*, 489.
49 1671.
50 759.
51 IV, 1.
52 *Lysis*, 211 E.
53 Act 2, Scene 3.
54 *Av.*, 1299.
55 Chrysippus, Athenaeus, 464 D.
56 *HA* IX, 620 A 32; *Mir. Ausc.*, 118, 841 B 15.
57 IV, 26.
58 X, 124.
59 See Pl. 21

CHAPTER XII

1 709 f.
2 I, 13.
3 944 f.
4 *Op.*, 484.
5 *Op.*, 448.
6 1075 f.
7 Thphr. *Sign.* VI, 3, 38. For the work's authenticity see Heeger, *De Theophrasti qui fertur peri semelon libro* (Leipzig, 1889).
8 I, 44.
9 Ael. III, 14.
10 Aratus, 1031 f.
11 *Sign.* VI, 4, 52.
12 1010 f.
13 963–69.
14 Ael. VII, 7.
15 *Sign.* VI, 1, 16.
16 *Sign.* VI, 1, 17.
17 Ael. VII, 7.
18 965.
19 1003 f.
20 *Sign.* VI, 3, 39.
21 1002.
22 949 f. The reference is possibly to the sea-crow (*Od.* V, 66) i.e. the noisy shearwater.
23 *G* I, 388.
24 Plut. *De def. or.*, 410 E.
25 Thphr. *Sign.* VI, 4, 53.
26 ibid. VI, 3, 39.
27 ibid. VI, 3, 39.
28 ibid. VI, 1, 18.
29 VII, 7.
30 913 f.
31 1021 f.
32 1024 f.
33 *Sign.* VI, 3, 38.
34 Aratus, 999 f.
35 Ar. *Lys*, 760. Or, in country districts, the scops owl whose monotonous note was heard at Olympia in March 1965.
36 Aratus, 942 f.
37 Aratus, 916 f.
38 Dion. II, 10.
39 Thphr. *Sign.* VI, 1, 28.
40 919.
41 Thphr. *Sign.* VI, 1, 15.
42 Arist. *fr.*, 240, 1522. The reference may, however, be to sea-daws (shags and such, friends of the gull, according to Ael. V, 48).
43 Horap. II, 92.
44 Ath., 360 C.
45 I, 44.
46 212.
47 Cook, *Zeus* II, 341.
48 V, 25, 5.
49 530.
50 313 f.
51 *HA* IX, 609 A 4, B 7, 12, 26, 610 A 1, 615 A 19, 33, 615 B 13.
52 *HA* IX, 609 B 26.
53 Aratus, 579 f.
54 Aratus, 449.
55 Aratus, 275 f.
56 Ael. X, 14 and reference in *GGB*, 116 f. and 146.
57 Cook, *Zeus* I, 244.
58 Plato, *Phdr.*, 274 D. See *GGB*, 113 f.
59 Ael. X, 29.
60 II, 38.
61 See Dawson, 'The Lore of the Hoopoe', *Ibis* 12 (1925), 31–35, 593–94.
62 I, 34.
63 Apollod. III, 10, 1. According to the *Suda* she was one of the seven

daughters of the giant Alcyoneus who committed suicide by drowning and were changed into halcyons.
64 See *GGB*, 50 ff.

CHAPTER XIII
1 719.
2 *Mem.* I, 3.
3 *Abst.* III, 5, 3.
4 *Il.* X, 274 f.
5 XXIV, 315 f.
6 XIII, 831 f.
7 VIII, 247 f.
8 *Od.* XV, 525 f.
9 *Od.*, 531 f.
10 *Od.*, 160 f.
11 174 f.
12 *Od.* XIX, 536 f.
13 *Il.* XII, 200 f.
14 237 f.
15 *Il.* II, 308 f.
16 *Od.* II, 146 f.
17 *Od.*, 181 f.
18 *Il.* I, 69, VI, 76; Aesch. Supp. 57.
19 *Il.* II, 858, XVII, 218.
20 Eur. *Phoen.*, 767.
21 Eur. *Supp.*, 500. For Ornithoscopia i.e. prediction from the flight and cries of birds. See P. Amandry, *Mantique Apollinienne*, 57.
22 *On Divination* I, 6.
23 *Il.* I, 70.
24 *Il.* II, 106 f.
25 *Il.* XII, 237 f.
26 *Il.* II, 178 f.
27 *Il.* VI, 76.
28 *Il.* VII, 44.
29 *Od.* V, 65 f. Cf. *Il.* XII, 418; XIV, 308.
30 See Rose, *Primitive Culture*, 42.
31 See Chapman, *Llasa*, 311, who describes how in Tibet chortens must be passed on the right and circuits made clockwise. Even in art, figures which faced the right were thought to be lucky. Méautis, *L'Ame Hellénique*, 75 f.; De la Coste-Messelière, *Musée de Delphes*, 316 f.
32 *Il.* VII, 183 f.
33 *Il.* XII, 238 f.
34 However, Jevons, *CR* X, 22 f., argued that augurs always faced east.
35 *Il.* X, 274 f.
36 *Il.* XXIV, 315 f.
37 Wilamowitz described it as 'schwerlich griechisch', *GH* I, 148.
38 See Bouché-Leclercq, *HD* I, 129.
39 *SIG*, 1167.
40 See Herbillon, *Musée Belge* XXVIII (1924), 61 f.
41 I, 48. Birds were still regarded as the gods' messengers by Porphyry, *Abst.* III, 5, 3.
42 Edited Hercher, *Philol.* VIII, 1953, I, 166 f.
43 *P. Oxy.* XVII, 2080, 60 f.
44 10. See Pollard, *G & R* XVII, 51, October 1948, 116 f.
45 IV, 34, 8.
46 See 'to the ravens'.
47 826 f.
48 Proclus to Hesiod, *Op.*, 824 f. See Wilamowitz, *GH*, 148.
49 543 f.
50 213 f.
51 550 f.
52 *Fr.*, 26. The poet is old and wishes to be carried on their backs. (Ael. VII, 17).
53 *Fr.* 28–35, 75 (Edmonds, Loeb).
54 Olympian, II, 88.
55 6 f.
56 *Isth.* VI, 52 f.
57 Life 10. See Keller, *Tierwelt* II, 28 f.
58 See 44.
59 104 f.
60 See Verrall, *Agamemnon*, Appx I, C, 198 f. Yet 'Poorer in spirit' in Fraenkel's view (Agamemnon, 70, 70). What is being emphasized is the difference in rank between the two leaders. See my article *G & R* 1948, 117. Fraenkel mentions the importance from the augural point of view of differentiating between as many types of eagles as possible. Arnott suggests either a mature and immature golden eagle or an immature and mature white-tailed eagle (former nester *Copais*. *CFG* II, 43). I saw a falcon attack an eagle on Hymettus in 1949. See *JS*, 40. Rose. *Aesch.* II, Addendum, 299.
61 205 f.
62 24 f.
63 See Altheim, *Roman Religion*, 50.
64 Schol. *Od.* XI, 290; Eust., 1685, 25. See Bouché-Leclercq, *HD* II, 15.
65 *Abst.* III, 4.
66 487 f.
67 *Od.* XV, 175.
68 *Od.* XVI, 216 f.
69 *Ag.*, 48 f.
70 223 f. See Tucker, *Supplices*, n. to 197 f., 51 ff.
71 58 f.
72 999 f.
73 IX, 16, 1. See Frazer *ad loc.*
74 310.
75 395 f.
76 *Ant.* 994 A.
77 Ael. X, 34.
78 *Anab.* I, 25.
79 Iambl. *Protrept.*, 119, 4. See Frazer, *CR* 1891, V, 2, who considered swallows a bad omen in the case of Pythagoras, though in general good. D'Arcy Thompson disagreed, 231.

80 *Protrept.* Ch. IV, 46 P.
81 Arist. *Fr.*, 192, 1512 B 9; Hesychius 'i.e. to say don't admit gossips under your roof'.
82 III, 9. According to Paus. IX, 38, 3, a crow located the bones of Hesiod.
83 Avienus to Aratus, 1025.
84 Schol. in *Aves*, 1138.
85 Schol. in *Aves*, 705.
86 Plut. *Alex.*, 27, Clement of Alexandria refers to ravens trained to give oracular responses (*Protrep.*, Ch. II).
87 Plut. *Alex.*, 73.
88 Paus. X, 15, 5.
89 *HA.* IX, 618 B 16.
90 *Them.*, 12. For owls as birds of omen see Marót, *Die Anfänge der griechischen Literatur*, n. 145, 205.
91 Diod. XX, 11, 3.
92 Artem., *Oneir.*, 137 (White).
93 ibid., 138.
94 Ath., 656 C.
95 *Anab.* VI, 1, 23.

CHAPTER XIV

1 *HA* II, 504 A 11. See n. 55 to Ch. IV.
2 *Zeus* I, 197 f. and 253 f.
3 *Suda* see Iynx.
4 Tzetzes on Lycophron 310.
5 Pind. *Pyth.* IV, 214.
6 II, 17. See Gow, *Theocritus* II, note to Idyll, II, 17 and *JHS* LIV, 1934, 1 f.
7 *A.P.* V, 204.
8 *GGB*, 126.
9 *Paean* XI, 9 (Bowra).
10 6, 11 (Conybeare, Loeb II, 53).
11 I, 25.
12 See n. 2.
13 III, 26.
14 I, 45.
15 See Jackson, *BK* II, 602.
16 *Cyranid.*, 88 (Ruelle). See *GGB*, 93.
17 See Dawson, *Ibis* XII (1925), 35.
18 *Cyranid.* 43 (Ruelle). See *GGB*, 98.
19 See Dawson, op. cit., 33.
20 ibid., 38.
21 I, 3.
22 Dsc. II, 56
23 Verg. G III, 280.
24 Alex. Trall. I, 561. See *GGB*, 322. Alexander was a writer on medicine (6th c. AD?).
25 Plin. XXXVII, 33
26 Ael. I, 42.
27 Ael. I, 44.
28 Parat. facil. III, 155. Also for the kidneys according to *Cyranid.*, 93 (Ruelle). See *GGB*, 218.
29 Dsc. II, 54.
30 Alex. Trall. II, 307, 325. See *GGB*, 168.
31 Plin. XXX, 12; Alex. Trall. II, 135.
32 Plin. XXX, 30; Celsus IV, 7.
33 *Cyranid.*, 99 (Ruelle). See *GGB*, 323.
34 *Suda.* See *GGB*, 323.
35 *De simpl. med. temp.* X.
36 Pseudo-Dsc. See *GGB*, 162.
37 Plin. XXIX, 37; or crows.
38 Pall. I, 35, 1. See Cook, *Zeus* III, 793.
39 Cook, *Zeus* III, 793.
40 Ael. I, 43.
41 *Cyranid.*, 100 (Ruelle). See *GGB*, 327.
42 II.
43 Plin. XXIX, 38.
44 See *GGB*, 85
45 Dsc. II, 53.
46 *Cyranid.* 98. See *GGB*, 303.
47 *Gp.* XVIII, 11.
48 Plin. XXIX, 38.
49 Ael. XIV, 7.
50 I, 35.

CHAPTER XV

1 328 f.
2 III, 40.
3 V, 38.
4 *GGB*, 191. Arnott considers that Lesbia's 'passer' was a sparrow since it chirped (pipiabat) and was short-lived. See Ch. III, n. 63.
5 *Av.*, 18.
6 Ath., 359 E.
7 See Armstrong, *FB*, Ch. 9.
8 VI, 7.
9 *Char.*, 7.
10 *Abst.* (*On Vegetarianism*), III, 4.
11 X, LX, 124.
12 Dosith. (Hausrath, 311; Perry, 493). Plut. (*De Soll. An.*, 967), and Ael. (II, 48) refer the fable to the raven. First in Bianor, *A.P.* IX, 272.
13 X, 60.
14 Plin. X, 59
15 See Ch. IV, n. 1.
16 X, 59.
17 VI, 19.
18 I, 18.
19 *Satyricon*, 28.
20 *HA* VIII, 597 B 25.
21 I, XIX.
22 *A.P.* XI, 502 (W. R. Paton, Loeb).
23 *Indica*, I, 15, 8.
24 XIII, 18.
25 Arist. *HA* IX, 614 A 14.
26 *CFG* II, 106.
27 XI, 39.
28 *A.P.* VII, 204 (W. R. Paton, Loeb).
29 *A.P.*, 205
30 *A.P.*, 206
31 *A.P.*, 203
32 *A.P.*, 202.
33 *Alc.*, 10.
34 *Lysis*, 211 E.
35 789.

36 See n. 24.
37 XIII, 25.
38 Ath., 373 D.
39 96, 133.
40 *A.P.* VII, 222.
41 Ar. *Plut.*, 1011.
42 Artem., 2, 20.
43 207.
44 770 f.
45 Ar. *Av.*, 707.
46 Ael. I, 6, V, 29, VII.
47 Ael. II, 40
48 Ael. VI, 29.

CHAPTER XVI

1 *Av.*, 514. G. E. Mylonas (*AJA*, 1946, 286), however, argued that the intimate association of Zeus with the eagle began only in the later 8th or early 7th century. See Cook, *Zeus* I, pl. XLII.
2 I, 5, 3.
3 IV, 34, 6. See Frazer *ad* II, 11, 7.
4 VI, 26, 3.
5 Diod. I, 87, 9; Horap. II, 56.
6 *Schol. vet.* in Pind. *Pyth.* IV, 6, 95, 4 ff. See Cook, *Zeus* II, 179.
7 Pind. *Pyth.* IV, 4; Plut. *De def. or.* I, 409.
8 *Th.*, 521 f.
9 *CMR* III, 84 ff.; Cook, *Zeus* II, 777 ff.
10 *Av.*, 1247–78.
11 134.
12 *Od.* XI, 578.
13 *Par.*, 35. So an eagle saved Gilgamos of Babylon when a baby (Ael. XII, 21) and Aristomenes, the Messenian hero (Paus. IV, 18, 5). See Farnell, *Cults* I, 93.
14 In the Louvre. See Dévambez, *Greek Painting*, No. 60; A. B. Cook, *Zeus* I, figure 65, 93.
15 See Cook, *Zeus* II, 757.
16 ibid., 761.
17 VIII, 7.
18 VI, 20, 12.
19 Xen. *Cyr.* VII, 1, 4.
20 V, 11, 1.
21 *Pyth.* I, 6.
22 *Fr.*, 884 (Pearson).
23 Cook, *Zeus* I, figures 391 f., 528 ff. and text 527 ff.
24 See n. 4.
25 Bloesch, *Antike Kunst*, pl. 3, 4, 5. See Pollard, *AJPhil*, LXIX, 4 October 1948, 372.
26 Edmonds, *FAC*, No. 175.
27 Nilsson, *MMR*, 495.
28 Ar. *Av.* 301 and scholia.
29 See Seltman, *Greek Coins*, 50 ff.; Nilsson, *MMR*, 494.
30 *Ilios*, 308 ff. Athena's association with the owl cannot be proved before the 6th century BC. See D. Le Lasseur, *Déesses Armees*, 38.
31 *Antiquités de la Troade*, 21–23. See *Ilios*, 287 ff.
32 *Die Entdeckung Ilions zu Hissarlik*, 56–57. See *Ilios*, 289.
33 *CMR*, 77 ff.
34 *BCH*, 1908, 529 ff. But see Watson-Williams and Stubbings, *G & R* 1954, 36 ff.; 1955, 35.
35 See n. 2.
36 See n. 3.
37 Paus. II, 11, 9, 'where they take Coronis' (see Ch. XXI) and Frazer, Pausanias, note to II, 11, 7.
38 See n. 4.
39 But he also adds the alternative possibility that the cock could be considered sacred to Athena in her capacity of Ergane – the Worker.
40 Porph. *Abst.* III, 5.
41 *Od.* XV, 525. According to Porphyry (*Abst.* IV, 16), it was also sacred to Helios.
42 See Coward, *BBI* II, 17. Selous (*Ornithological Observations in Iceland*, *Zoologist*, 1916, 54 f.) refers to the whoopers 'melodious outpourings', while Powys (*Ibis* II, 1860, 350) describing wild fowl in the Gulf of Petala (Epirus) says 'On one occasion we were much excited by the evolutions and music of a small flock of Wild Swans'. See now Wilmore, *Swans of the World*, who quotes (129 f.) an example of a dying whistling swan singing. I owe this reference to Professor W. G. Arnott who refers in an as yet unpublished article ('Swan Songs') to the musical exhalation of the dying whooper.
43 Ael. X, 36, V, 34.
44 XXI.
45 769.
46 84 E.
47 Paus. I, 30, 3. See Frazer *ad loc.*
48 II, XIX.
49 XI, 1.
50 I, 1 (Edmonds).
51 Hdt. I, 159. For Aristeas and raven see Hdt. IV, 15.
52 *VH* V, 17.
53 Zosimus, *Histories* I, 57, 6. See *GGB*, 258.
54 See Cook, *Zeus* III, 1016 ff.
55 *Il.* V, 778.
56 IV, 2.
57 Ael. X, 33.
58 See Parke, *Oracles of Zeus*, 65 ff. and 68 ff., who thinks doves may have been involved; Cook, *CR* XVII, 1903, 185 ff.;

Jebb, Sophocles *Trachiniae*, Appendix, 200 ff.
59 Hdt II, 55. The leaders of the chorus in Alcman, I, 60, were apparently dressed as doves.
60 *Od.* XII, 62. There is no mention of Zeus' infancy in Homer as in Athenaeus, 491 B.
61 I, 9.
62 391 F.
63 For references see *GGB*, 184.
64 565.
65 655 A.
66 See Imhoof-Blumer and O. Keller, *Tier und Pflanzen bilder*.
67 Eur., *Hel.*, 1096; *Ov.*, *Met.* XV, 385; Paus. II, 17, 6. See Frazer *ad loc.*
68 *The Dream* or *the Cock*, II, 175 (Loeb).
69 IV, 29. Also to Demeter, according to Porph. (*Abst.* IV, 16).
70 *Abst.* IV, 16.
71 Phd., 118.
72 V, 9.
73 Paus. V, 25, 9. See Frazer *ad loc.*
74 XVII, 46.
75 Paus. V, 25, 9. See Frazer *ad loc.*
76 Ath., 655 C. But was never attacked by hawks (Ael. V, 27).
77 *Abst.* IV, 16.
78 Ael. X, 35.
79 Ath., 392 D, i.e. Heracles, son of Asterie and Zeus who was killed in Libya by Typhon and brought to life again when Iolaos brought a quail in lieu of smelling salts.
80 *Av.*, 567; Ath., 411 C.
81 *Av.*, 566.
82 Cornutus, *Theol. Graec.*, 30, 61, 22 f. (Lang). See Cook, *Zeus* II, 524.
83 Plato, *Phdr.*, 274; Ael. X, 29, Gwyn Griffiths, *IO*, 558 f.
84 *Av.*, 870.

CHAPTER XVII

1 *JHS, Arch.* for 1968–69. Fig. 33, 28.
2 ibid. 1970–71. Cover picture and 22.
3 ibid. 1968–69. Fig. 46, 34.
4 ibid. 1963–64. Fig. 11, 11.
5 Frontispiece to Evans, *PM* II.
6 Charbonneaux in Quillet, *HGR* I, 3.
7 See Pendlebury, *Archaeology of Crete*, 248; Cook, *Zeus* II, pl. XXVII, 516 f.
8 *JHS* XXI, 121.
9 *AfRw.* XII, 167, n. 2. It has recently been suggested by the ornithologist George H. Watson that the birds, being painted yellow and black, are golden orioles. See Long, *ATS*, n. 13, p. 41.
10 *Zeus* II, 518 f.
11 *Themis*, 179.
12 *MMR*, 337.
13 *PM* I, 632 f.
14 *Zeus* II, 927 f.
15 *PM*, II, fig. 193. Compare Bossert, *Art of Ancient Crete*, 169, fig. 295.
16 *Av.*, 514.
17 Karo. *Schachtgräber*, pl. XXVII, figs 27, 28.
18 Marinatos. *Arch. Eph.*, 9 (1937), 278 f., figs 1, 8, 9, 2.
19 Armstrong, *FB*, frontispiece and references.
20 Evans, *PM* IV, 393, fig. 329 A, 460.
21 ibid., III, 70
22 *Religion of Greece in Prehistoric Times*, 35 f.
23 *PM* IV, 26.
24 See Nilsson, *Eranos* XV, 189 f.
25 *PM* III, fig. 41
26 *PM* I, 146, fig. 107.
27 *PM* II, 766, fig. 497.
28 *Delt. Arch.* VI, 1921, Appendix, 158, fig. 5.
29 *BSA*, 1938, XXXI.
30 *Kyrene*, 153 f.
31 *BCH* XV, 1891, 1 f. and pl. VII.
32 Nilsson, *MMB*, 506 f.
33 H. Payne, *JHS* (1933), 166 f.
34 *BSA* XXXV, pl. 25, 1.
35 *JHS*, 1933, fig. 18, 292, 295.
36 *BSA* XXXV, pl. 21, 4, 5, 82.
37 *BSA* XXXV, 101.
38 *Berlin Vases*, 2452.
39 Fairbanks, *Athenian white lekythoi* II, pl. 18, 1, 230.
40 *FD* V, 120–21.
41 Hogarth, *Ephesus*, 337 f.
42 Plut. *Thes.*, 21.
43 Marinatos, *BCH* LX, 1936, 241, fig. 17, 18.
44 Melaart, *Çatal Hüyük* (*Proc. Brit. Ac.* 51, 1965, 201 f.).
45 *Über den Baumkultus der Hellenen und Römer*, esp. Chap. III.
46 *Wald- und Feldkulte*.
47 See Chap. XVI n. 58.

CHAPTER XVIII

1 58 f.
2 *The Iliad.* Note *ad loc.*
3 Paus. IV, 16, 5. See Frazer *ad loc.*
4 *Od.* III, 371 f.
5 See Festugière in Quillet, *HGR* I, 41.
6 105.
7 22.
8 *Il.* II, 795.
9 *Od.* XXII, 239 f.
10 Nilsson, *GGR*², 345 f.
11 *Od.* I, 319 f. The meaning of this passage has been

disputed. See Merry, *The Odyssey ad loc.*
12 *Od.* V, 337 f.
13 51 f.
14 349 f.
15 The meaning of 'harpe' was disputed. Both Aristotle (*HA* IX, 609 A 24) and Aelian (II, 47) regarded it as a sea-bird, but Dionysius' description (I, 4) is decisive.
16 616 f.
17 *Il.* XV, 236 f.
18 531 f.
19 77 f.
20 *Il.* XII, 187.
21 *Il.* V, 778.
22 *Fr.*, 149, 1503 B 1.
23 *CR* XVII, 185 f.
24 *GGR* I², 349, n. 4.
25 62 f.
26 70 f.
27 See Leaf *ad loc.*
28 Aen. I, 405.
29 *Il.* XIV, 289 f.
30 *Av.*, 1180.
31 *HA* IX, 615 B.
32 *Ilios*, 113.
33 Apollod. III, 126.
34 Hyg., 77.
35 *Hel.*, 17 f.
36 See n. 33.
37 *Fr.*, 79 (Loeb).
38 *PV*, 975.
39 Armstrong, *FB*, Ch. 3.
40 See Guthrie, *Orpheus*, 80 and 95.
41 *Av.*, 691; Pollard, *AJ Phil.* LXIX, 4, October 1948, 373 f.
42 XV, 64.
43 Lucian, *Dial. D.* Zeus and Ganymedes.
44 Ath., 395 A; Apollod. I, 4, 1 with Frazer's note; A. B. Cook, *CR* XVII, 1903, 186.
45 According to a fragment of Philodemus quoted by A. B. Cook, *Zeus* II, ii, 1130 f., who suspects confusion with the god's cult title Epopsios (Overseer) with Tereus (Watcher).
46 Apollod. I, 4, 1.
47 *Dion.* I, 28; Schol. Ar. in *Av.*, 102; Moschus, *Idylls* II, 55.
48 XXVIII.

CHAPTER XIX

1 II.
2 *Il.* IX, 524 f.
3 See *GGB*, 197.
4 Ath., 655 C – ; Ael.V, 27.
5 See under *Meleagrides.*
6 Paus. X, 32, 9.
7 IV, 42.
8 X, 38.
9 See under *Meleagrides.*
10 III, 12, 4.
11 On Verg. *Aen.* VI, 57.
12 X, 31, 6. See Frazer *ad loc.*
13 XXXVII.
14 I, 1.
15 III, 193 f. The *Bibliotheca* is not by Apollodorus himself.
16 Notably the serving up of his son Pelops to the gods by Tantalus (Pind. *Ol* I, 46 f.) of Thyestes' children by Pelops' son Atreus (Apollod. *Epit.* II, 12). and of Hippasos (Ant. Lib. X).
17 II, 29. For Epops as Attic hero see Daux, *BCH* LXXXVII (1963).
18 *Od.* XIX, 518.
19 *Op.*, 568
20 *Fr.*, 122 (Edmonds, Loeb).
21 *HA* IX, 633 A 19.
22 60.
23 XLV.
24 I, 41, 9. cf. Aesch. *Ag.* 1142 f.
25 With the notable exception of Verg. *Ecl.* VI, 78.
26 XIX.
27 See Pollard, *AJPhil* LXIX, 4, October 1948, 358.
28 III.
29 V.
30 VI.
31 *Resp.* X, 620 B.
32 *A.P.* VII, 62
33 VII.
34 IX.
35 Ant. Lib. X. cf. Ov. *Met.* V, 539 f.
36 ibid. XII.
37 ibid. XIV.
38 ibid. XV.
39 ibid. XVIII.
40 ibid. XX.
41 ibid. XXI.
42 ibid. XIX.
43 *Fr.*, 323 (Pearson).
44 See Rose, *JHS* XLVIII, 1928, 9 f.
45 Hyg., 274.
46 Lindsay, *CQ* XIX, 103; but Thompson regarded it as mythical (*CQ* XIX, 1925, 155–58).
47 Callim. *On Birds*, Pfeiffer *fr.*, 685; *Suda*, *Iynx.*
48 *Il.* IX, 563.
49 Apollod., 1, 7, 3. According to the *Suda* she was one of the daughters of the giant Alcyoneus. When he died they committed suicide by diving into the sea from a cliff and were changed into halcyons. For the myth of Alcyone see G. K. Gresseth, *TAPA*, 1964, 88 f. who interprets it as a sun myth.
50 Ov. *Met.* XI, 783 f. The poet's description suggests a stilt or avocet. See Arnott, *CQ* 1964, 261.

CHAPTER XX

1 *Av.*, 471 f.
2 *CR* XVIII, 1904, 81.
3 XI.
4 *CR* XVIII, 1904, 81.
5 *Od.* XIX, 58 f.
6 *Supp. Maidens*, 62.

7 III, XIV, 8.
8 *CR* XVIII, 80 ff.
9 XLV.
10 XIX.
11 Cook, *Zeus* II pl. 42, 929.
12 Nilsson, *MMR*, I², 546 f.; Jane Harrison, *Themis*, 1 f.
13 *Boanerges*, Ch IV.
14 *FB.*, 104 n. 1.
15 *FB.*, 104.
16 *GM* I, 192 n. 1.
17 Bury (*JHS* VII, 157–60), like Graves, supposed that Io was originally a moon goddess.
18 e.g. the ancient Life of Pythagoras 17. For a detailed survey of authorities see Cook, *Zeus* II, 693 n. 4.
19 See under *Pekos*.
20 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* I, 14. 'Piquier Martier' occurs in an Umbrian inscription (Tables of Iguvium, Conway, *Italic Dialects*, I, 421 f. II, 64). A woodpecker appears on the François tomb (Goidanich *SE* IX, 107 f.).
21 Verg. *Aen.* VII, 189.
22 *CR* XXXVI, 110.
23 *Zeus* III, 44 f.
24 II, 36, 2.
25 II, 17, 4.
26 Figured by Armstrong, *FB*, pl. 29 b, 176.
27 *Zeus* III, 63.
28 *TCHR* II, 163 f.
29 Farnell, *Cults* I, 181 f.
30 Paus. I, 218, n. 208.
31 *GD*, 251 f.

CHAPTER XXI

1 499 f.
2 Schol. in *Av.*, 499.
3 See Ch. III, n. 159 and n. 161.
4 ibid. 160.
5 Figured by Armstrong, *FB*, fig. 83, 182.
6 360 C.
7 Epigr. XV, 11.
8 Fr., 122 (Edmonds, Loeb).
9 Ar. *Eq.*, 419.
10 See *GGB*, 320.
11 359 E.
12 III, 9.
13 XXI.
14 XII, 9.
15 XV, 28.
16 391 A.
17 II, 30.
18 II, 34, 2.
19 Ael. III, 31, VI, 22.
20 Ar. Vesp, 508.
21 IX, 619 A.
22 *Il.* III, 6.
23 *HA* VIII, 597 A 7.
24 XVI.
25 393 E.
26 II, 32.
27 See G. M. A. Hanfmann, *OCD*² under 'Pygmies'.
28 *GM* I, 56, 4, 193.
29 IX, 609 A 8.
30 III, 9.
31 *Suda* 207 C.
32 Plut. *De garr.*, 14 509 F; Schol. in Ar. *Thesm.*, 168; *Suda* under *Ibykos*; Ar. *Av.*, 1427.
33 See under *Ibyx*.
34 *Fr.* 89 (Loeb).
35 Hyg. CCII.
36 I, 9.
37 *Op.*, 202 f. For fables about the nightingale in Greek and Latin poetry see A. R. Chandler, Classical Journal, XXX (1935), 78 f.
38 Plut. *De soll. an.*, 968 F.
39 Ap. Rhod. II, 328, 557–75.
40 *Od.* XII, 62.
41 Athenaeus, 388 C.
42 III, 42.
43 VII, 25.
44 VIII, 20.
45 XI, 15.
46 V, 28.
47 I, 29.
48 *Av.*, 471.
49 *Av.*, 652.
50 Aesop, 5 (Halm), 1 (Hausrath), 67 (Robb).
51 Aesop, 21 (Halm), 266 (Hausrath), 81 (Robb)
52 Aesop, 8 (Halm), 2 (Hausrath), 69 (Robb).
53 Aesop, 206 (Halm).
54 Aesop, 204 (Halm), 126 (Hausrath), 10 (Robb).
55 Aesop, 4 (Halm)
56 Aesop, 29 (Halm), 25 (Hausrath), 84 (Robb).
57 Aesop, 6 (Halm).
58 Aesop, 93 (Halm).
59 Aesop, 99 (Halm).
60 Aesop, 100 (Halm).
61 Aesop, 205 (Halm), 74 (Robb).
62 Aesop, 208 (Halm).
63 Aesop, 92 (Halm), 68 (Robb).
64 Aesop, 416 (Halm).
65 Aesop, 416 B (Halm).
66 Aesop, 170 (Halm).
67 Aesop, 199 (Halm), 128 (Hausrath), 70 (Robb).
68 Aesop, 202 (Halm).
69 Aesop, 207 (Halm).
70 Aesop, 209 (Halm).
71 Aesop 343 B (Halm).
72 Aesop, 210 (Halm),
73 Aesop, 212 (Halm).
74 Aesop, 312 (Halm).
75 Aesop, 276 (Halm).
76 Aesop, 356 (Halm).
77 Aesop, 398 (Halm).
78 Aesop, 340 (Halm).
79 Aesop, 379 (Halm).
80 *GGB*, 233.
81 e.g. *Le Pélican* by Alfred de Musset (*La nuit de Mai*) I am grateful for this reference to Mrs M. Giles Jones.
82 III, 23.
83 Quoted by Meinertzhagen, *BA.*, 429.
84 *Av.*, 1355.
85 Ael. III, 23.
86 Horap. I, 53; Ael., X, 16.

87 *Od.* XVI, 217.
88 49.
89 *GGB*, 26.
90 I, 11.
91 Apollod. II, V, 6; Paus. VIII, 22, 4. See Frazer *ad loc*
92 Ap. Rhod., 386, 1054.
93 See Frazer, *Pausanias* IV, 275; Hyginus says the clappers were used 'in the manner of the Curetes', the Cretan priests of Zeus.
94 VIII, 22, 7. See Frazer *ad loc.*

CHAPTER XXII

1 See Payne, *Necrocorinthia* 90, n. 3.
2 See Cecil Smith, *JHS* XIII, 104; Wilamowitz, *GH* I, 144.
3 See Buschor, *MJ*, 28.
4 ibid, fig. 16.
5 Cook, *Zeus* III, fig. 597; Nilsson, fig. 16 *MMR*, I², 492. The mysterious superscription 'Wous' appears by the Siren. It has been interpreted both as a form of phoyx (shearwater) or the hoot of an owl. See K. Marót, *Die Anfänge der griechischen Literatur*, 152.
6 Cook, *Zeus* III, fig. 600.
7 *Zeus* III, n. 1 to 799.
8 Buschor, *MJ*, 53.
9 *Od.* XII, 39 f.
10 Payne, *Necrocorinthia*, pl. 36.5; Pollard, *AJA*, 1949, 357 f.
11 BM E 440. *CVA*, London pl. 20 1.
12 Kunze, *AM* LVII, 1932, 133. Pl. V 5.
13 e.g. in association with Dionysus. BM B 14; Pollard, *JS*, 161; *SSS*, 141.
14 e.g. on a black-figured lekythos in the BM, no. B 651. See Haspels *Attic Black-figured Lekythoi*, 151, n. 3, appendix XV, no. 48, 256; Life of Sophocles; Wilamowitz, *GH*, I, 268 f.
15 *BM Catalogue of Sculpture*, I, new edition, 161.
16 See Lane, *BSA* XXXIV, 139, 158–59 and pl. 42 B.
17 Karlsrühe, 81; Cook, *Zeus* III, fig. 601, 801.
18 BM E 477. See Cook, *Zeus* III, pl. 12 and 73, n. 5.
19 *Seelenvogel in der Antiken Literatur und Kunst.*
20 II, 4.
21 *A.P.* VII, 62.
22 *Seirenen* AM LVII (1932).
23 *MJ*, passim.
24 Hel., 167 f.
25 *Fr.*, 903.
26 *Fr.*, 6 (Diehl).
27 X, 617 B.
28 Symp., 745 CD
29 Ap. Rhod. Argon. II, 187 f.
30 I, 4.
31 *BCV*, 1682.
32 No. 354. Langlotz, *GVW*, 164, 23 f. pl. 27.
33 VIII, 22, 7.
34 As in Homer, *Od* XX, 66 and 77 where Penelope prays to Artemis for deliverance from her lot of violence if necessary, like the daughters of Pandareos who were snatched away by the Harpies to become slaves of the Erinyes.
35 *Alexandra*, 653.
36 *Il.* XXII, 362–63. For the view that Homer may have visualized the soul as a bird see Marót, *AGL*, 151.

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——, ibid., *CR*, XVIII (1904), 75 f., 325 f. and 360 f.
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